

The Star

Jordan's political, economic and cultural weekly

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Voir page 12

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اسبوعية سياسية مستقلة

Israeli fair opens in Amman amidst mass protest

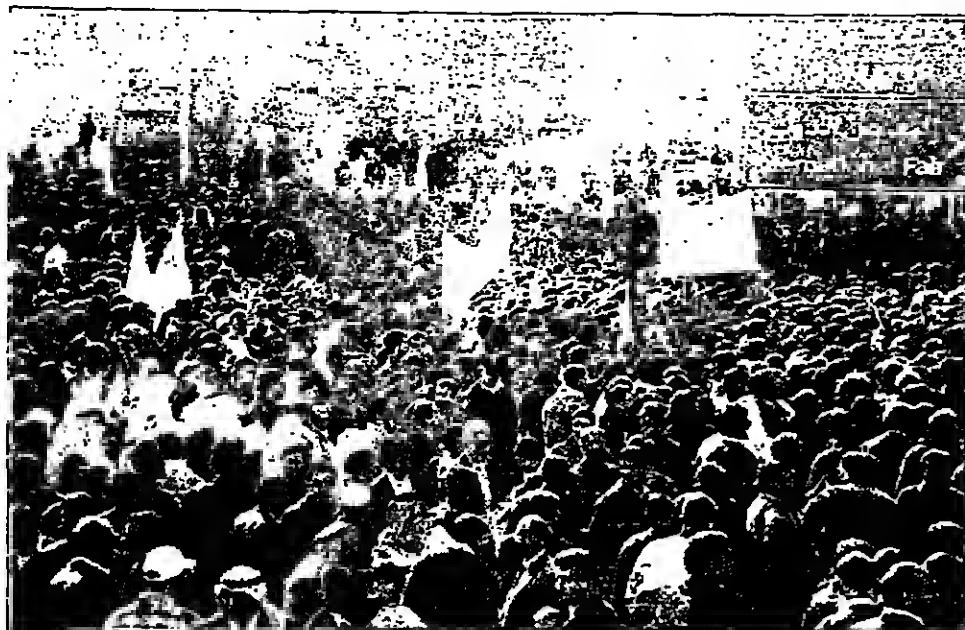
By Raed Al Abed
Star Staff Writer

IT IS an unhappy new year for Jordan-Israeli relations. This was symbolized in the anti-Israeli trade fair protest that occurred yesterday, Wednesday. It all began at 8 pm when anti-riot police, formed a chain on the two sides of the Airport highway leading to the International Fair Hall where the fair was being held.

The protesters, whose number according to some unofficial estimates reached as high as 3000, tried to force their way to the complex by forming a 'human dam'. It was to be right up to the main gate of the exhibition in Marj Al Hamam, 20 kilometers south of Amman. However, police cordoned off demonstrators 200 meters away from the fair.

Protesters came in droves but the trade fair was eventually held three hours later. While the fair was to have 75 Israeli companies, only 40 firms showed up.

The site was like a 'security zone'. Hundreds of security and anti-riot police were fully prepared. They had been camping outside the place since last Sunday. Police also had anti-riot cars, water cannons and police-dogs. When the protest started they showered



Mass protesters assemble just before the International Fair

protesters by water cannons. But this did not dampen down the atmosphere and shoving and pushing ensued from both sides. At one stage police was seen tearing down banners.

"The police are our brothers, they are implementing orders to safeguard security and we [protesters] are doing our duty to protect the national interest,"

Mr Ahmad Obiedat, a former Prime Minister, and the head of the Jordanian National Committee for the Cancellation of the Israeli Trade Fair said. Obiedat told protesters to avoid clashes with the police, and to adhere to a peaceful sit-in.

The number of protesters could have been even higher if they were allowed to get near the expo. According to eyewitness reports, security forces prevented a number of buses especially from Karak, Irbid and Zarqa from reaching the fair.

Demonstrators were from all walks of life and different political trends. Lower House deputies such as Toujan Faisal, Talal Obiedat and members

from the Islamic bloc were in the forefront.

In addition to the traditional opponents of the Jordanian-Israeli peace treaty, signed in 1994, there was a large number of officials from centrist parties and independents. The Secretary General of the Al Mustaqbal Party, Sulaiman Arar was joined by people like Ishaq Al Farhan of the IAF.

"I am sorry for the day I voted for the peace treaty," said Lower House independent deputy Dr Nazeeh Ammarin, who was one of the 52 legislators who voted for the treaty in November 1994. "The treaty was a mistake. It serves only Israeli plans," he added.

But it was the Islamist slogans that made most impact. The late Hamas bomb maker Yahya Ayash, who was killed by Israeli agents, was remembered by the crowd. Songs, poetry and slogans immortalizing the man and his suicide bombings, were repeatedly chanted.

Back to the 'pre-peace' era slogans, demonstrators attacked Zionism describing it as the 'forever enemy of humanity' and promised to 'struggle to liberate Palestine and Arab Jerusalem.'

"No to Zionists in Arab Jerusalem."

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• HIS MAJESTY King Hussein paid a one day-visit to the southern Egyptian city of Aswan for talks with the Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, yesterday, Wednesday. The two leaders discussed the recent developments in the peace process especially on the Palestinian-Israeli track. They stressed that all parties concerned in the peace process must live up to their obligations towards the principles of peace. They also highlighted bilateral relations and Arab and other international issues. The King attended a ceremony to inaugurate the new Delta project for the development of southern Egypt. He was accompanied by Prime Minister Abd Al Karim Al Kabariti, Royal Court Chief Awn Al Khasawneh and the Jordanian Ambassador to Egypt. In attendance also was Egyptian Prime Minister Kamal Al Jazouiri, political Presidential Advisor Usama Al Baz and other high ranking Egyptian officials.

Survey suggests Jerusalem issue may not be deal-breaker in talks

By Barton Gellman

LA Times, Washington Post News Service
OCCUPIED JERUSALEM—With the final stage of Israeli-Palestinian talks set to begin this year, negotiators are turning attention to the difficult issues they agreed to save for last: Palestinian statehood, boundaries, Jewish settlements, Palestinian refugees, and—perhaps most intractable of all—Jerusalem.

A new survey of Israelis, published last Monday, suggests that Jerusalem might not be the deal-breaker it is often supposed. The poll results cast doubt on the widespread view that this Israeli occupied city, holy to three religions and claimed as capital by Palestinians as well as by Jews, is the rock on which the talks are likeliest to founder.

The survey, while confirming Israeli Jews as inflexible over the fate of Jerusalem in principle, breaks significant new ground by probing deeply into what they mean by Jerusalem and where they draw its lines. Though virtually all respondents said Jerusalem is important or very important to them and four-fifths opposed any bargaining on its future, further questioning revealed clear distinctions between neighborhoods.

Every political faction, from right to left, showed strikingly less attachment to the areas where Jerusalem's Arabs live than to Jewish neighborhoods.

When asked about the outlying Arab neighborhoods annexed to Jerusalem after the 1967 Arab-Israeli War, more Jews were prepared to "seriously consider" transferring them to Palestinian sovereignty than to reject the idea outright.

Nearly all such compromise proposals fell short of majorities in the survey, and there was no significant support for what Palestinians frame as their basic negotiating demand: all of East Jerusalem, including the walled Old City, as the capital of an independent state. Even so, according to its generally dovish authors, the survey suggests a good deal more room for maneuver by the Israeli government, if the government wants it, than most analysts previously supposed.

"If there's anything this study can do, it can legitimize serious political discussions about Jerusalem," said co-author Jerome M. Segal, who wrote a 1989 book arguing for a Palestinian state. "It can embolden political leadership."

Few surveys, if any, have probed as deeply into Israeli attitudes over Jerusalem. The authors of this one, Elihu Katz and Shlomit Levy of Israel's Guttman Institute and Segal of the University of Maryland, asked 100 questions in

Continued on page 2

Building joint economic force is a necessity, Arab businessmen stress

By Iliam Sadeq

INVESTING REGIONALLY was the name of the game for the first Arab Businessmen conference that ended in Amman yesterday, Wednesday.

Under the patronage of His Majesty King Hussein, over 600 businessmen from 15 Arab countries met for three days to enhance pan-Arab coordination and cooperation in the face of what they regarded as the onset of global challenges.

"The presence of His Majesty King Hussein in the conference is a step forward to revive Arab solidarity. It encourages us as businessmen to have a major role in development and shoulder the responsibility to achieve Arab aspirations," Mr Hamdi Al Tabaa, chairman of the Jordan Businessmen Association told The Star.

Opening the conference, King Hussein assured Arab businessmen that "no force will be able to block the march towards peace in the Middle East, or stop people's rights to

enjoy stability and tranquility."

The process of development is a joint effort between the government and the private sector, but identifying each other's role helps to remove obstacles facing businessmen in Arab countries, Al Tabaa added.

The conference is the first of its kind to come from the Arab private sector. It was sponsored by the Jordan Businessmen Association and the Egyptian Businessmen Association (EBA).

The presence of the Arab League Secretary General, Essam Abdul Maguid added to the importance of the gathering which is targeted at bridging Arab economic relations and bolstering pan-Arab ties in view of the formation of regional economic blocs in the world.

Representatives from private sector institutions showed a real desire to join the Arab Businessmen's Council, which was established during the conference.

Some of these businessmen are authorized by their institu-



tions to sign the agreement to establish the council while others who approved the council are still awaiting confirmation from their respective countries, Al Tabaa said.

The chairman of the Egyptian Businessmen Association, the co-sponsors of the event, Mr Saeed Al Tawel told The Star that the conference proved

highly successful. "Our discussions over the first two days focused on presenting working papers from each participating state, and the last day was an open forum for businessmen to meet directly with their counterparts and exchange views, agendas and proposed projects," he added.

Al Tawel continued that the Arab Businessmen's Council will have a board of directors that comprises heads and representatives of joint associations and business unions to meet regularly to follow up resolutions and mechanisms.

Participants agreed that Amman would be the headquarters of the Council, its head being the chairman of the Jordanian Businessmen Association while his deputy would be the chairman of the Egyptian Businessmen Association, Al Tabaa said.

The last day of the conference was a working session between Arab businessmen. They met face to face to discuss the prospects of joint ventures, investment opportunities and hammer out the possibility of regional projects.

A Qatari businessman, Mr Abdullah Saleh Abdullah said that the conference had a hugely positive trait. It was a good opportunity to meet, and acquaint ourselves with other Arab businessmen to know more about investment opportunities.

Another Egyptian businessman sees the event as a chance to exchange data on commercial and industrial sectors in Arab countries and be able to transfer such data from one country to another.

The venue succeeded in achieving closer relations between businessmen. It underlined the importance of the private sector as a pedestal for future economic relations.

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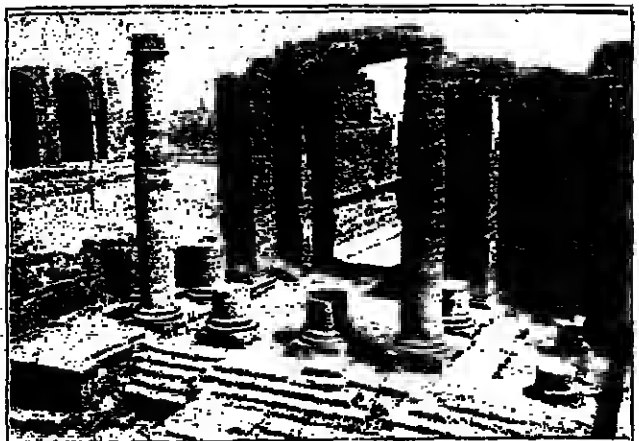
Antiquities fever robs Iraq of cultural legacy

By John Daniszewski
LA Times-Washington Post News Service

BABYLON, Iraq—The robbers struck at midday, using hammers to smash the unguarded wooden door of the small visitors' museum near the Ishtar Gate into Babylon, once the most magnificent city in the ancient world and now among archeology's most famous sites.

They worked undetected. The vast site, circled by 11 miles of walls rebuilt in "the time of Saddam Hussein," the bricks are stamped with a reminder—have been practically unvisited in the six years since Iraq became an international outcast.

The thieves selected 43 rare and beautiful pieces of antiquity: five large seals and 37 seal rings from the time of Nebuchadnezzar, the same despot who destroyed the Temple in Jerusalem and took



Shahrir Temple

the Jewish people into captivity when he ruled Mesopotamia in the 6th century BC.

The theft in April was the last straw for the Iraqi officials struggling to conserve this country's rich cultural heritage.


Every remaining antiquities museum in the country was ordered closed, and all pieces were taken to

Baghdad for safekeeping. They now lie under guard in a darkened storage area of the Iraq Museum there, shut away from scholars and tourists alike.

It is, according to state antiquities director Muayed Said Damerji, the only way to keep them safe.

"You've heard of gold fever? We have something like antiquities fever," said Said, who believes that thousands of

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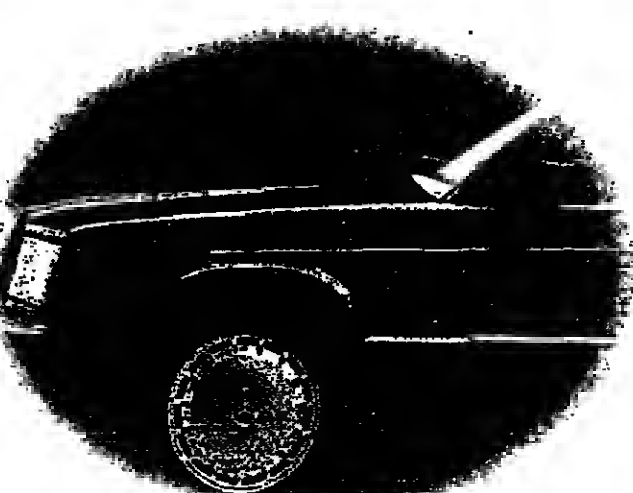


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By Munther Hamdan
Star Staff Writer

Amman cinemas

Running short of reels

THE SALT and pepper-haired Muhammad Al Mughrabi, a man in his fifties, sighed while recalling how the once lucrative and ecstatic work at cinemas in downtown Amman became a symbol of bitter reality. His job as a supervisor at Basman cinema, an area hardly void of shoppers and pedestrians, today earns him little compared to what he used to get in the heyday of cinemas in Amman almost four decades ago.

"Everything about cinema was better in the old days," he stresses.

However, Al Mughrabi is one among scores of workers in Amman cinemas who feel increasingly alienated. Besides their financial problems, movie houses are no longer the center of attraction for many Ammanites.

Cinema managers and critics say that in the past cinemas used to play an educational and a cultural role. However, it is increasingly declining today because of developments in media technology.

As radio, television, the video recorder and the satellite, came to the forefront, cinemas found themselves on the sidelines.

"Why should people bother going to the cinema while they can watch movies through videos and satellites at home," asks Mustafa Salch, a journalist and a cinema critic. He says that film producers today depend largely on the latest audio-visual film-making techniques to distract people's attention from the main issue the film is highlighting.

The owners of the old cinemas were obliged to devise all possible means to keep their work going. This is because of the high prices of renting original films and the rental of show halls.

"The current ticket price can't cover the price of renting an original film that can sometimes cost as much as JD 70,000 per copy," stresses Al Mughrabi.

In the past, Arabic, English and Indian films were shown round the clock. For example, the films of the Egyptian actor Farid Shawqi were on top of the list of people's choices. "I remember attending Marlon Brando's *The Godfather* about

seven times during its two-month showing at Al Khayyam cinema," pointed Salch.

Al Mughrabi says that modern audiences are unlikely to come to the cinema unless "you present them with violent and action pact films that include such actors as Van Dam and Sylvester Stallone."

In their drive to boost their audiences, cinema managers are going wholesale. For only a dinar, one can watch six films nonstop at almost all movie theaters in downtown Amman. "This is a way to attract people who want to watch more than two films for one ticket price. Besides that, cinema attendants shout the names of the film stars to draw people's attention," he adds.

Apart from action pact adventures, some cinemas at present focus on blue movies which attract the youth and the under-age. Instead of assuming an educational role, these cinemas are looking for mere profit.

In the past, going to the cinema was a family affair. While family members or couples made it a habit to visit picture houses regularly, this has all changed. Because of this strive towards commercialism, cinemas today have turned into an all male gathering, that is of course except for some cinemas in the western part of Amman. "Only one or two families a month come to the cinema," says Al Mughrabi.

But how was the situation in the past? How did people think about the cinema decades ago?

Without a doubt, the establishment of Al Petra, the first cinema in the forties in Souk Al Sukkar in downtown Amman, was something of a novelty. People then barely had an idea about the 'cinema

thing.' Yet for them it was a great pleasure to discover its secrets.

Being unfamiliar with the kind of films presented, people reacted to the showings in an emotional way. According to Salch, people used to clap and cheer while watching the hero beat his enemy or when the film had a happy ending. "The cinema, he added, captivated people's minds and the number of moviegoers increased rapidly despite its unsophistication at that time. "Al Hussein cinema used to rent a pick-up trucks with film posters hoisted at the sides and driving in the streets of Amman to announce through a loudspeaker new films."

Today, things have changed. The cinema map in Amman is divided. There are the old cinemas in the downtown area frequented by males only, and the new ones which attract both sexes.

Old theaters are Al Khayyam, Al Urdun, Basman, Raghadan, Zahran, etc. A number of cinemas like Petra and Al Fardous have long closed down. Others like Al Fayomi changed their names to Al Khayyam.

As to the new cinemas, there is now the Plaza, Concord and Philadelphia which have bigger screens. Their ticket price is JD 3 per film.

Among the old founders of Amman cinemas are Muhammad Al Taher, Ismail Al Kurdi, Mahmood Abu Qoura and the Saqali brothers. Each one of those owned



more than one cinema.

"Some of them established production companies in Egypt and even had their own cinemas there. For example, Al Kurdi had the Dollar Film Co., while Al Taher owned the Dinar Film," Salch says. "During Gamal Abd Al Nasser's era, these companies were nationalized."

Contrary to what many would say about cinemas, there are people who are optimistic and say that with good films,

cinemas can once again move into the limelight. Nasser 56, the Egyptian film about President Nasser and the nationalization of the Suez Canal, was a box office hit all over the Arab world and including Jordan.

"Had the film been distributed to video shops before being shown in movie houses, the number of those who would have seen it would have been much less," Al Mughrabi points out.

Asia-Pacific human rights group meets in Amman

AMMAN (Star)—The Asia-Pacific Human Rights NGOs Facilitating Team, held its fifth workshop on regional arrangements for the promotion and protection of human rights in the Asian and Pacific Region. It was organized by the United Nations Centre for Human Rights in Amman. The conference expressed its concern about the lack of representation of the relevant NGOs in the "open ended" team that comprised representatives of interested governments of the region.

The Facilitating Team is the representative body of more than 300 NGOs across the region.

It first elected 240 participants representing 110 non-governmental organizations who attended the Asia-Pacific NGO Conference on Human Rights in Bangkok, Thailand between 25 to 28 March 1993. It then adopted the Bangkok

NGO Declaration on Human Rights.

More than 117 delegates from 28 countries representing national and regional NGOs in the Asia-Pacific region and elsewhere were present at the Asia Pacific Human Rights NGO Congress held in New Delhi, India from 6 to 8 December 1996.

The New Delhi meeting was the third such gathering of Asia-Pacific human rights activists and the second since the 1993 Vienna Conference on Human Rights.

The Asia Pacific NGOs congratulated the various governments and the UN Centre for Human Rights in Geneva for taking the Amman initiative. However, it suggested the adoption of instruments and mechanisms to ensure compliance with the principles of the UN Charter and in conformity with the already existing international human

rights norms and standards. The meeting recommended the following principles about a regional human rights mechanism:

■ The charter should not permit any limitations or derogations of rights from existing international human rights norms and standards, for example, on grounds of national security, public order, state of emergency, or the equivalent states are bound to respect human rights in all situations.

■ The charter must respect the principles of universality, indivisibility and non-selectivity of human rights. In addition, it must reflect the new set of rights, for example, women's rights as human rights, the rights of the children and the indigenous peoples, the right to development as a human right, the rights of refugees and so on.

■ The officially held perspective of the Asian "system of government culture, and traditions" should not be used as a pretext for the continued violation of human rights.

■ A Regional Mechanism on Human Rights must have jurisdiction to conduct fact-finding missions, and undertake country, thematic and other studies; examine the reports of State Parties under various treaty bodies, and to receive complaints from Member States, NGOs, victims and other individuals against violations of human rights.

■ The Commission should be composed of independent experts appointed in consultation with representative NGOs. Its meetings and reports should be accessible to the public, including NGOs; and petitions or appeals under consideration should not preclude action on the same issue by other UN human rights bodies.

■ States parties must pro-

vide adequate budgets and personnel for the effective functioning of such mechanisms.

■ States of the Asia Pacific region must establish national human rights institutions to enforce the existing international human rights instruments and standards, including regional human rights instruments upon their implementation.

The Asia Pacific NGO movement urged governments to reflect their concern on the Right to Development as evidenced in the countries' positions in the discussion on the need for an Optional Protocol for the United Nations International Convention on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. The NGOs urged that in the national situations they looked forward to governments making economic, social and cultural rights justiciable in domestic jurisdiction. State Parties were urged to ratify and adhere to the ILO conventions.

In the ultimate analysis, it is the space for dialogue that governments create in the domestic domain that provides the best bulwark for the enhancement of human rights. The meeting commended the building block or step by step approach of the governments. They however said that the NGOs look forward to as a first incremental step, concrete measures that will address the issue of trafficking in children and women.

Finally, the NGO representatives stated that their Meeting must be considered by States as an opportunity to work with the non-governmental organizations—to strengthen the existing institutions, standards and policies, and develop new and more effective ones to stop human rights violations. ■

Antiquities fever robs Iraq of cultural legacy

Continued from page 1

priceless pieces already have been stolen from Iraq, pieces whose value to art and antique dealers would be in the millions of dollars.

Because ancient Iraq was the stage for the world's first civilizations, the pillaging is obliterating a legacy that belongs to the whole civilized world, said McGuire Gibson, professor of Mesopotamian Archaeology at the University of Chicago Oriental Institute, who has studied the problem extensively. "It's as if the Liberty Bell was stolen and then sold and then was going to end up locked away in Germany or someplace else. What would your reaction be?"

Since the breakdown of order that followed Iraq's defeat in the 1991 Gulf War, museum officials admit they have been almost helpless to staunch the hemorrhage of treasures from ancient Sumer, Babylonia and Assyria that have left the country, sometimes literally by the truckload.

Experts say the pieces wind up with antique dealers in London and Zurich, Switzerland, in some cases accompanied by phony documents showing legal provenance, or in the homes of wealthy collectors around the world.

Not only have museums like Babylon's been plundered, but also well-known archaeological sites like the palace of Assyrian King Sennacherib at Nineveh, in northern Iraq.

In 1990, John Russell, a Columbia University archaeologist and art historian, took 900 photographs to document the series of translucent alabaster reliefs hanging in the throne-room suite at Nineveh. They afforded a rare glimpse of religious practices and military campaigns from 27 centuries ago.

Last summer, he was alarmed when a representative for a European museum asked him to evaluate a photocopy of an Assyrian relief it was considering buying. He recognized immediately that it was from the same slabs he had recorded. The museum turned

down the purchase, the seller vanished in a maze of middlemen, and Russell can only guess at the destruction going on.

Recently, a representative for another potential buyer asked him to evaluate photographs of 10 Assyrian pieces, all of which also turned out to have been taken illegally from Nineveh.

"Photographs may be the only available record of what was once there," Russell wrote in an article for the International Foundation for Art Research.

He advises anyone considering buying ancient art from Iraq to consult experts, because chances are high that it is illicit. Said the Iraqi antiquities director, said old tombs and previously unexcavated archaeological sites are being set upon—sometimes by entire villages that, he suspects, are filling orders placed by foreign buyers.

There are at least 10,000 such sites in Iraq, and Said's Department of Antiquities can afford to guard only a few. Robbers and smugglers are highly motivated, because even a 1- or 2-inch-square tablet fragment with ancient cuneiform writing can fetch \$1,000-\$2,000 abroad, Said noted.

Recently, the looting has assumed the size and appearance of organized crime, with a gun battles erupting when thieves stormed sites at Nasiriyah. In Urech, guards killed one would-be robber; two others got away.

To dramatize the problem, two years ago the department invited scholars from around the world to view one large room filled entirely with items confiscated at border crossings. Now "we'd have enough to fill three big halls," Said said ruefully.

The benefits are often farmers and Bedouin herders, he said. Formerly, they earned money by working on archaeological digs; up to 200 local laborers might have been hired at each site. Because of UN policies to isolate Iraq, foreign archaeologists no longer

come. "The real tragedy is that the people in Iraq digging this up are just people trying to stay alive," Gibson said. "Five dollars to them is a lot of money. Even a dollar is good deal of money."

Since sales of oil and most imports were banned in 1990, the Iraqi economy has been in a downward spiral, and Iraqis are selling whatever they own just to survive. Jewelry, rugs and furniture, along with antiquities and artworks, have flooded bazaars and been taken out of the country in huge quantities.

Not surprisingly, crime and violence have exploded, and there are broad swaths in the north, south and west of the country where the government's authority is barely felt.

Gibson became aware of the extent of the problem when he found himself being offered bagfuls of "cylinder seals" and fragments of clay cuneiform tablets when he dropped in on antique dealers on Portobello Road in London in the early 1990s. "This has never happened before," he said.

Cylinder seals such as those stolen from Babyloo are small, exquisitely carved cylinders of stone or metal that, when rolled over moist clay, left the reverse image as a message or signature—like a very small printing drum.

Used to mark documents or property, they often were worn by their owners on a bracelet or necklace and buried with them when they died.

The London dealers claimed they had come by the items legally, but Gibson was skeptical. "When you are being shown a bag of 100-150 seals, that's not coming out legally."

The trade is a worldwide problem, Gibson said. Persian antiquities cascaded onto the market after Iran's 1978-79 Islamic Revolution and that the problems in Iraq began on a large scale after the Gulf War. Today, much loot is coming out of Afghanistan, he said.

The value is calculable only in terms of what buyers are willing to pay, and in the bustling world of big-league collecting, that can be a lot.

"The bottom dropped out of a lot of things, but it didn't drop out of the antiquities market," Gibson said. "The value of antiquities has only grown. ... An awful lot of this stuff is being bought by people who really love these objects."

Survey suggests Jerusalem issue may not be deal-breaker in talks

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face-to-face interviews with 1,530 Jews between September 1995 and January 1996. The survey claims a margin of sampling error of 4 percent.

A major purpose of the study was to discover the connections between what Katz called "the mental map of the city" in the minds of Israeli Jews and the actual municipal boundaries drawn by Israel's government after the 1967 war.

Few Israelis, it emerged, recalled that the government not only "reunited" the city after expelling Jordanian forces but expanded East Jerusalem, roughly ten-fold. West Bank Arab villages such as Sur-Baher, Um Tuba, Beit Safafa and the Shuafat refugee camp, the respondents knew clearly which parts of city were Jewish and which Arab, and they used them accordingly.

That result is entirely surprising. For a decade now, since the Intifada of 1987-93, West Jerusalem taxi drivers have been reluctant to drive to East Jerusalem's Arab neighborhoods, unmoved by the government's position that the entire city was Israel's "unified, eternal capital."

The new survey quantifies the extent to which Israeli Jews divide the city psychologically into "ours" and "not ours." Of the 99 percent of those surveyed who said they had been to Jerusalem, 70 percent said they have never been to any of the Arab neighborhoods outside the Old City. Another 23 percent had been no more than "once" or "a few times," and a handful had never heard of the neighborhoods at all.

Katz, a leading authority on Israeli public opinion, said the survey identifies three large blocs of Jewish adults—each about a fifth of the population—prepared to consider some degree of compromise on Jerusalem.

Only the most dovish group, 21 percent, supported the broad principle of "negotiations on Jerusalem within the peace process." But twice that many respondents, 45 percent, said they would consider seriously or very seriously a proposal to "transfer" to Palestinian sovereignty the Arab settlements and villages previously in the West Bank which are now within the borders of Jerusalem. And support reached 59 percent for roughly the same proposal when it was framed as "redefining the city limits" to exclude Arab neighborhoods. "In order to ensure a Jewish majority."

The most significant pattern in the survey, according to Segal, is that Israeli Jews of all political and religious views set clear priorities between more and less important parts of Jerusalem, and all of them agree on where the priorities are. No demographic group, even those defining themselves as politically to the right of the governing Likud Party, said that the Arab neighborhoods are "very important" as "part of Jerusalem."

"As soon as you get to where Palestinians live, the numbers fall off a cliff," Segal said. ■

CLASSIFIEDS

● The University of Bologna in Italy is looking for every foreign students (non-Italian) who graduated in Bologna from 1945. An important social research has been started and a questionnaire will be sent to the graduates contacted. All foreign graduates are kindly asked to write their current address to: (Friends or relatives who know useful information are asked to write to: Osservatorio Statistico, Dipartimento di Scienze Statistiche "P. Forti", Università di Bologna via Belle Arti 41, 40126 Bologna BO, ITALIA

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The Rituals of Ramadan

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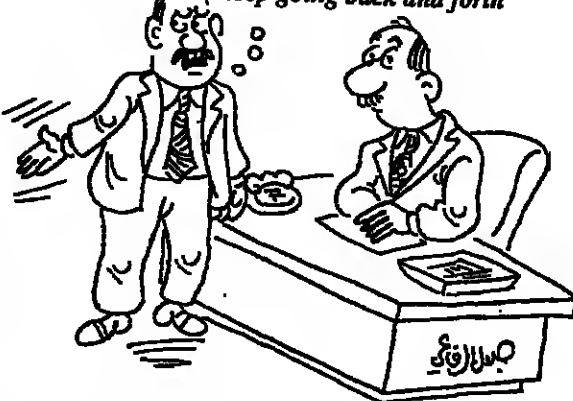
JORDAN

W E E K

An unconventional report on Jordanian news and views edited by Marwan Al Asmar



It's like the Hebron negotiations, I keep going back and forth



No coupons!

Anyone with a cellular phone will not be eligible for supply coupons! In a directive, the Ministry of Supply stated that those who have cellular phones don't need supply coupons. These are supposed to be for the needy, ministry officials argue, as if we didn't know. The ministry of course would be right in normal circumstances, however, people in this country like to put on a big show, showing-off is the word. Quite a lot of people who carry cellulars these days can't be categorized as belonging to the high- or even medium-income categories and are likely to feel hard done by. But the ministry's decision, if true, would be rather foolish to say the least. Will Supply officials, for instance, now stop demanding to see proof of income and start looking for cellulars? Where would they be looking for, on the persons themselves, in their pockets, or in their bags, "excuse me please let me check your pockets," that really would be a sight for sore eyes. It is really quite hard to imagine people going in to collect their coupons in supply centers while talking to their pals on the other side of the line. Of course, I could be wrong.

The election season

The season of elections is upon us again. No, it is not the national elections, or the local, but it is for the professional associations. First to kick off is the elections for Jordan's Lawyers Association (JLA). Although it is not till March, the door has just opened for anyone who want to stand for the post of president or for the association's council. The present JLA president Hossein Mijalli is standing for re-election. However, he is challenged by two other seasoned lawyers, Salah Al Armouti and Jawad Younis, the former defence lawyer of Leith Shbeilat. What is interesting is that the 300 JLA lawyers from the West Bank will be taking part in the elections. The association has 4000 members. Elections for medical practitioners and chemists will also be taking place.

And the Writer's Association

Elections for the post of president of the Jordanian Writer's Association (JWA), that will take place in April, is likely to prove even hotter. There are 10 persons who nominated themselves to the post. These include few surprises. The former Minister of Information, Dr Khalid Al Karaki is putting his name down. Whether he wins or not is for the JWA members to decide, but Dr Karaki will likely face a tough opposition from veterans like Fakhri Qawar, Saleh Al Nabat, Hashim Gharaibeh, Sultan Al Azzi, Abdullah Radwan and Jamal Naji. The JWA has 405 members.



Al Karaki

Getting the boot! Not a chance

It seems that *Ahlan Houkouna*, that Arabic program of fun and laughter, did not get the boot after all. It was not the case of putting the plug out on Nabeel and Hisham. According to JTV director, Nasser Joudeh, the program performed its full quota. They screened 12 of the 13 episodes. Joudeh said that JTV decided not to air the final episode because the comic duo sought to do a reevaluation program of their past episode. However, *Ahlan Houkouna* came under fire right from the start. Its sketches of Lower House sessions created much criticism from deputies who unsuccessfully lobbied JTV to cancel the program. In the end we can say that freedom of expression prevailed. However, the cancellation of the final program courteous to raise much speculation. Was Joudeh's explanation sufficient or is there another more deep-seated reason. It would be really hard to argue that Nabeel and Hisham were booted out by JTV, and this is not a cloak and dagger story.

Al Ahd faces splits in its Zarqa branch

Every once in a while political parties in the country face splits. And Al Ahd party has been having its fair share. The latest is collective resignations in Zarqa. In fact, the president of the Al Ahd branch in the city and most of the members have submitted their resignations according to *Al Majd*. It is argued that the branch has been neglected by the central leadership in Amman, and its president Deif Allah Al Qallab, who managed to increase party members to 60 in Zarqa, has not been asked to meet by the Amman leadership for over two months; he says neither has there been any contact with the Zarqa branch.

Satellite dishes for sale

Well actually smuggled satellite receivers are for sale. The other day Customs officers uncovered a large shipment of satellite receivers and watches that were hidden in a natural oil refrigerator truck that came in from Dubai. After becoming suspicious, the officers began a thorough search of the truck and found 48 receivers and 2500 women and men watches on board. The value of these is estimated at JD 25,000. Normal customs duty on these items is JD 80,106.

UNRWA workers threaten to increase industrial action

Trouble could be brewing again among UNRWA workers in Jordan. The follow-up working committee which is dealing with the conditions of employees has said that it will continue to take industrial action if its demands are not met. The committee has already sent a message to UNRWA Director-General, Peter Hansen, who is yet to reply to. The workers are demanding a change in the policy of wages and salaries so that it would take into account the increased cost of living, an improved end of term service and early retirement. The working committee has already recommended a daily one-hour stoppage, but threatened to increase their industrial action.

Prince Hassan receives international prize

HIS ROYAL Highness Crown Prince Hassan receives an international prize, tomorrow, Friday, from the Institute of Science and Society in Madrid. The Science and Society Prize is given for the Prince's work to further international political and economic and security cooperation as well as human understanding, human rights and peace-keeping. Throughout many years, Prince Hassan worked hard to bring about common understanding between the different people of the globe.

At a ceremony held tomorrow, Prince Hassan will be one of the main speakers at the institute, whose honorary president is King Juan Carlos of Spain.

Previous recipients of the prize include Cardinal Raul Silva Henriquez from Chile (1987), Helmut Lidemann, former deputy secretary general for Human Rights of the UN (1990), and Martti Ahtisaari, the president of Finland (1993-94).

The Science and Society Prize reflects

the Spanish view of building a more peaceful world based on fairness and justice and which is sensitive to the public opinion of other countries. This is something that Prince Hassan always believed in and advocated.

After the ceremony, the Prince will attend a conference on the Mediterranean Countries, that is organized by non-governmental organizations. The conference's aim is to further understanding between the countries of the region and work for a better world.

The meeting will be working according to the principles of the Mediterranean Charter that was adopted in 1996 which consider the Mediterranean region as the cradle of the great monotheistic religions, Judaism, Christianity and Islam.



Liberalization of prices require supervision, experts argue

By Ilham Sadeq
Special to The Star

THE GOVERNMENT'S intention to liberalize consumer goods after the holy month of Ramadan is awaiting the efficiency of the private sector.

Supply Minister, Munir Sobar said earlier that whenever the private sector offers imported commodities at competitive prices, then his ministry would cease price control.

"The ministry embarked on a strategy in the light of global policies and international trade agreements to give the private sector a greater role. We have removed restrictions on imported auto spareparts and basic foodstuff items and are permitting the private sector to import them," the minister said.

"They can also import wheat, barley, sugar, rice, foreign cigarettes, olive oil, frozen meat and chicken, beans and lentils," Mr Sobar added.

However he pointed out that "the ministry will still have a supervisory role over prices and quality to protect the consumer."

Such a development if true could lead to heated competition among private importers. However, despite the warnings of the Supply Minister, prices of certain goods could very well increase. But others could also go down because of market forces.

Analysts see it as a two-way street and say that the beneficiaries will be both the merchant and the consumer. Merchants would be allowed to import and sell on a competitive price. The consumer will thus have a greater choice, better quality and lower price.

"Liberalization of prices gives way to competition among importers and merchants and certainly leads to cut prices. This naturally serves the consumer's interest," Mr Adnan Al Sallakh, general manager of the Export and Finance Bank told *The Star*.

While in favor of such a

development, he said that the government must have a supervisory role or at least have a fixed ceiling.

"Importers must be monitored so as to prevent price monopoly control and safeguard the consumer," Al-Sallakh added.

Free trade is a necessity, but within some restrictions. "This is also to prevent some importers or merchants from generating huge profits," he continued.

From his side, the chairman of the Jordanian Federation of Chambers of Commerce, Mr Haydar Murad stressed that the liberalization of prices was a demand from the trade sector in the past. He believes that the market mechanism is the only one that can build a sound commercial sector which can operate in an open environment with free competition.

Mr Murad expected prices to decline because of the variety of imports that would be coming into the country.

However, there are clearly differences in view. Dr Munir Hamareh, an economics professor at the University of Jordan, is not enthusiastic about the liberalization of prices.

"Liberalization or flotation of prices means allowing the mechanism of supply and demand to fix prices, without any governmental decision," Hamareh pointed out.

"In the Jordanian market, we lack the real factors that determine prices, 'perfect competition conditions' do not exist."

On the contrary he added that there already exists a monopoly situation in the country



Sobar

and certain merchants do monopolize the market for certain goods and products.

He added that it is because of this that market mechanisms are unable to fix prices.

Dr Hamareh warned that this will result in a series of imbalances in the market, a case which requires government intervention.

Liberalization, according to Dr Hamareh, requires series of measures such as laws to combat monopolies, making the availability of supervision to control profit and provide official control that secures a balance between individual income and wages and the levels of changes in prices.

This indicates the need to establish a balance between incomes and living costs. Any violation or even neglect of this formula will certainly lead to a serious social imbalance, Dr Hamareh warned.

"The market seems to be plentiful these days. Whereas in past years, very real shortage occurred just before the month of Ramadan, this is not the case this year. The Ministry of Supply did its homework this year and carefully planned out a strategy to make sure that consumer goods are available in shops."

In addition to that some prices of basic foodstuffs are really going down. Can we assume that this is from the benefit of liberalization, we can only wait and see. However, Hamareh said that prices in the world do not usually go down, it's a rather upward increase.

Point of order

By Raed Al Abed

About unemployment

It is really immature to hear an official talking on TV, and in front of a crowd, about the government's intention to create a national strategy to solve unemployment!

Jordanians are no longer prepared to dance to the tune. People have become all too familiar with such government slogans. They know that such must be taken with a pinch of salt.

Unemployment is not only a real point of weakness for politicians but a terrible waste of investment in human resources. This is especially so when one realizes that manpower is the bread and butter of any national economy.

Therefore, reliable information and data is a real need. Indeed, this is the crux of the problem. However, the sorry fact is that it is impossible to obtain reliable and credible information concerning the unemployment ratio.

Why? Because the government's planning kitchen is like a jigsaw puzzle. There is lack of coordination between the Statistics Dept., Social Security, the Civil Service Bureau, Labor or Planning Ministries. Those agencies should join forces and come out with a comprehensive study to provide us with real statistics and facts about the unemployment situation in the Kingdom.

It is only through careful planning and coordination that we can arrive at a wholesome picture that would include the employment situation in the private sector.

But the most qualified body that can really initiate this kind of coordination is either the Prime Ministry, or the Planning Ministry. It is really a simple solution that requires careful organization and methodical thinking.

By doing so, planners can relay the most available statistics to these agencies. They can then share the information and 'plan' accurately with regards to the job market.

The clock is ticking, no time to waste, the unemployment rate in the country in 1995, was officially estimated at 14.2 percent; however others put it as high as 17 percent.

We have to plan to be able to overcome that potential chaotic situation that could face us a couple of years from now, bearing in mind the trend to privatize and the increasing number of graduates who join the labor market every year.

It is a bad shot, Petra

The chronology of events for 1996 that was made and released by *Petra*, the official Jordanian news agency, misses the facts. It completely ignores the Karak head riots that gripped the south of the country last August.

The "hardworking" directors at the agency filled its copy with the travels of our high ranking officials during 1996. Could it be that the agency is trying to convey a positive message for 1997? Well maybe, and who can blame them? After all, 1996 was a year of trepidation and anguish.

We find no logic in censuring a chapter in Jordan's modern history, whether it's black or white. If a month of crises in Jordan, which captured the world press and viewers, is not a big deal for *Petra* then we would like to know what is?

Petra directors have to realize that the agency is not only owned by the government, people too, have a stake.

Such practices have to stop. The Lower House is presently being asked to speed up the draft laws that are currently in their hands for the independence of *Petra* and JTV.

We believe that more professional talents must be yoked into the operations room of the agency. We look forward to the creation of a state media that complies with the democratic process which we enjoy.

Dropping such events from our past, is an unwise approach, as these crises were tough lessons for us to learn for a better future.

Noor Al Hussein Foundation
The National Music Conservatory

Activities for the Holy Month of Ramadan 1997

<p>15/1/1997</p> <p>Under the patronage of Her Majesty Queen Noor Al Hussein</p> <p>MUNIR BASHIR (oud)</p> <p>The Royal Cultural Centre</p> <p>Ticket price: JD 7</p>	<p>18/1/1997</p> <p>Russian Duo</p> <p>MARIA SAFARIANTS (violin)</p> <p>and</p> <p>CONSTANTINE ORBELIAN (piano)</p> <p>The Royal Cultural Centre</p> <p>Ticket price: JD 7</p>
<p>22/1/1997</p> <p>CONSTANTINE ORBELIAN (piano)</p> <p>MARIA SAFARIANTS (violin)</p> <p>and</p> <p>THE ORCHESTRA OF THE NATIONAL MUSIC CONSERVATORY</p> <p>Mohammad Othman Sidq, conductor</p> <p>The Royal Cultural Centre</p> <p>Ticket price: JD 7</p>	<p>25/1/1997</p> <p>PHILIPPE GIUSIANO (piano)</p> <p>The Royal Cultural Centre</p> <p>Ticket price: JD 6</p> <p>In cooperation with the French Cultural Centre</p>
<p>4/2/1997</p> <p>Under the patronage of Her Majesty Queen Noor Al Hussein</p> <p>LUTFI BOUSHNAQ</p> <p>in an evening of traditional and authentic Arab music followed by suhur</p> <p>Hotel Intercontinental Jordan</p> <p>Ticket prices: JD 75, 50 and 25</p>	

Tickets available at:

- Alahia Abela Superstore, tel. 688481
- Alissar Flowers, tel. 827695
- Babiche, tel. 661322
- Caffé Moka, tel. 856285
- Hotel Intercontinental, Jordan, tel. 641361
- The French Cultural Center, tel. 637009
- Safeway, tel. 685311
- The Royal Cultural Center, tel. 669026
- The National Music Conservatory, tel. 687620

Israeli fair opens in Amman

Continued from page 1

Amman. It is a shame on the government to allow them here," said Laith Shbeilat, president of the Jordanian Engineers Association who was released by a Royal Pardon last November, after eight months in jail on *lese majeste* charges.

Observers believe the country will experience another round of crises, since the opposition accused the government of ignoring the feelings of the majority of Jordanians who oppose the Israeli fair.

The trade fair is seen to be very much against local industry. Leading businessmen such as Wasif Azar, Hamdi Al Tabbaa and Hidar Murad are against the fair, although they didn't participate in yesterday's demonstration.

"At the time when Jordanian industry is facing bankruptcy, you can not market and promote the industry of an enemy. They are occupying Arab land that is good enough," said Dr Labib Khamhaw, a political commentator and the rapporteur of the committee.

Protesters who blocked the main road, forced several cars from going into the fair ground. However, few Jordanian businessmen braved the gauntlet and secretly drove into the fair.

According to national committee sources, the authorities allegedly threatened the use of force to prevent the demonstration. But in the end the demonstrators dispersed peacefully when the fair was opened after mid-day by the Israeli Ambassador in Amman, Shimon Shamir.

Under pressure from the opposition, the date of the fair was postponed twice; it was eventually held on 8 January.

The national committee convinced some Jordanian companies to withdraw their cooperation. In the end it was left to the Israelis to jointly handle the organization of the fair with the Jordanian organizer, Mr Fakhri Al Nasser, manager of the National and International Expo Corp.

The trade fair has three days to go. The national committee promise these to be the longest for the organizers. They will again meet today, to draw up a further plan of action. They already called for a three-day general strike in the country.

The committee promised to release a blacklist of those who gave a hand in or participated in the fair. The national committee has urged people to blow their car horns for five minutes, today, Thursday at 11 am across the Kingdom. The general mood in Jordan for the past week was buoyant. Daily newspapers for instance have continued to carry advertisement against the Israeli trade fair and anti-normalization slogans.

LURIE'S WORLD



New Year in Serbia

Our Say...

Arab businessmen: Sending a signal

THE MEETING of over 600 Arab businessmen and economic decision makers in Amman this week marks the first serious step in years on the long and arduous road of Arab economic complementarity. But that cherished goal remains an elusive one for a region that is still beset by political upheavals and divisions.

The meeting, which opened under the Royal patronage and organized by the Jordan Businessmen Association and the Egyptian Businessmen Association, could well be a historic one—not for the fact that it is the first of its kind, but because it could set the foundation for a new approach towards inter-Arab relations. In the past two decades we have seen failure after failure in attempts to impose distinctive political and economic groupings within the Arab world. The Maghreb Cooperation Council and the Arab Cooperation Council were two important projects that failed the moment they faced their first political challenges.

The Gulf Cooperation Council remains the only viable regional club, but it too is showing signs of political strain and is facing colossal challenges.

The Arab League, especially in the aftermath of Iraq's catastrophic invasion of Kuwait in 1990, also suffered irreparable damage and its satellite social and economic forums have all collapsed as a result. This is happening at a time when, after the peace process was launched, a new political and economic order is being enforced from outside the region. The series of MENA conferences have come—and may soon go—to deal with the prospects of a new Middle East in which Israel is being groomed to become a leading regional player. But the MENA institution has failed to address the issues of building an Arab economic market, encouraging Arab investments in the Arab world, liberalizing Arab economies and freeing the role of the private sector, opening up labour markets, creating strategies for pan-Arab economic cooperation... etc.

That is why this week's Amman conference deserves our support and commendation. The private sector could offer a way out of the current deadlock. It is already bailing out dilapidated state-run and centrally planned economies in eastern Europe, South East Asia and South America. The private sector is slowly taking the lead in Tunisia, Morocco and Egypt. Private funds are going into mega projects in Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Qatar. Could the private sector, represented by Arab financial institutions, public and private companies and entrepreneurs, succeed in creating an environment of inter-Arab economic cooperation where governments had failed? There is no doubt that without a political will little will change. We hope the Arab businessmen meeting in Amman this week will send a strong signal to Arab governments and we hope these governments will take there appeal seriously. ■

Myth of the 'Pax Americana'

In this poisonous atmosphere, we are still, remarkably, being asked to believe in the Middle East "peace process." The truth—that it is dead and may even have been stillborn—eludes us

By Robert Fisk

FROM AFGHANISTAN to the Mediterranean, it is now possible to travel through the Middle East and not pass through more than one country that still boasts a US Embassy. In Amman, the embassy is a fortress. In Damascus the compound is one of the smallest. In Beirut, Algiers and Cairo, US diplomats live in virtual bunkers, traveling only with large armed escorts. (Israel, of course, is another story.) However unpleasant the rest of the region's regimes may be, the startling fact remains that today more than half the Middle East is without a US diplomatic corp. Yet we are asked to admire the United States' political "success" in the Middle East—and to have faith that the grotesque imbalance built into the Arab-Israeli negotiations represents a just peace.

The unspoken truth is that US policies, and the Arab leaders who endorsed them, are becoming more unpopular in the region. But Western journalists rarely convey the depth or seriousness of this failure. Instead, they paint a false but glowing picture of "moderate" leaders moving together with the United States and Israel toward a new regional stability. This Pax Americana, which is founded on the Arab-Israeli "peace process," at its center, and the Iran/Iraq "containment program," at its fringe, necessitates much deception.

True, the Madrid peace conference in 1991 suggested that a just peace could be obtained for Arabs and Israelis. Former Secretary of State James Baker repeatedly said that a future peace would be built around UN Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338, the first of which demands Israeli withdrawal from all occupied Arab land and "acknowledgment of the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of every state in the area and their right to live in peace within secure and recognized boundaries free from threats or acts of force." Syrian President Hafez Assad asked for—and received—a confidential letter from Baker repeating the nature of the proposed deal: land for peace. On that basis, the Arabs turned up at Madrid.

Yasir Arafat's secret negotiations with the Israelis, however, destroyed the trust that was built into these official talks. For the 1993 Oslo agreement, while it claimed to be based on Resolutions 242 and 338, undermined them. It allowed for an Israeli redeployment in—rather than withdrawal from—the West Bank and Gaza Strip. It contained no international guarantees. And it fatally postponed discussion of the very issues that would have ensured real peace: future status of Jerusalem, Jewish settlements, a Palestinian state and the fate of the exiled 1948 Palestinian refugees who now number more than three million.

Oslo allowed an all-powerful Israel, backed by the most pro-Israeli US administration in a generation, to delay the timetable of withdrawals and begin to build huge new settler roads across the West Bank, slicing up the still-occupied Territory like a salami. Arafat was repeatedly ordered to crush Islamic opposition inside the portions of land he ostensibly controlled. And, since the most crucial elements of this "peace"—Jerusalem, settlements and statehood—were to be left to the end of the "process," they could no longer be a cause of contention. Indeed, the very "process" itself was used to legitimize what had been illegitimate. The West Bank, US diplomats were told, was no longer to be called "occupied"; it was to be referred to as "disputed"—as if the Israelis had some claim in international law to the tens of thousands of acres of Arab land that they had seized and built upon after the 1967 Arab-Israeli war. The Oslo accord, it turned out, was not based upon UN Resolutions 242 and 338. It provided an opportunity for the Israelis to renegotiate those resolutions.

Most journalists went along with this fiction. When Jews tried to extend a settlement in January 1995, for example, Jerrold Kessel felt able to tell CNN viewers that the settlers "feel themselves fully part of the landscape" and to refer in his report of January 16 to "heritage claims [sic] going back hundreds of years." No attempt was made to explain that the Jewish "claim" had no standing in international law and that the Palestinian "claim" was not a claim at all but legal ownership of the land. By the same token, anyone objecting to the "peace process"—either the Arafat variety or the Madrid version—was treated as "supporting terrorism."

By continuing this tendentious form of journalism into the period of the "peace process," reporters helped to establish a particularly dangerous trend: that of portraying Arabs as intrinsically less trustworthy than Israelis at a time when the Arabs themselves were being forced to accept what many of them regarded as an unjust peace. The vicious Palestinian suicide bombings of this spring were regarded as a direct assault on the

"peace process." In fact, they were retaliation for the Israeli murder of a Hamas bomber called Yahya Ayyash. Those who live by the sword—or the bomb—can expect to die by it, but Hamas was maintaining a cease-fire at the time and the Israelis must have known that the killing of Ayyash would provoke bloody revenge. Like the Palestinians, Jordanians have shown little affection for their own "peace." On the night of 26 October, 1994, I left my hotel in Amman to walk the eerily silent streets of the Jordanian capital. A few hours earlier, His Majesty King Hussein and Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin had signed a peace treaty in Wadi Araba, watched over by President Clinton. For the first time in almost half a century, Jordan was at peace. Its sons would never again have to go to war. In any other state, you would have expected the capital to explode with joy. And yet on that night in Amman, not a soul left his or her home. The streets were patrolled only by nervous and heavily armed security men, several of whom demanded to know my identity when I strolled into the empty city center. It was, in every sense of the word, an important news story: "Peace Breaks Out: No One Cheers."

But no one reported it. On CNN, on the US networks, on the front pages of newspapers across the United States, there were identical images of King Hussein and Rabin shaking hands, of President Clinton beaming with delight behind them. This wondrous extension of the Pax Americana that already covered Egypt and the West Bank and Gaza was a miracle that must not be disturbed by harsh realities, especially those that might throw into question the very nature of the peace itself.

The Jordanians' silence is understandable. More than half the population is of a Palestinian origin, and they saw all too painfully how little the Oslo agreement was going to achieve for their brethren on the other side of the Jordan River. The Israeli-Jordanian peace also claimed to be based on UN Resolutions 242 and 338. But the references to Palestinian refugees in Jordan related only to UN humanitarian organizations, and the frontier between Jordan and Israel was recognized as an international border between both states—even though part of Jordan's border runs alongside the West Bank, which is definitely not part of the state of Israel.

For both the Palestinian Authority and Jordan, the promises of an economic boom have not been fulfilled. The government could scarcely have been surprised at the rioting that followed the ending of bread subsidies this summer. Jordanians saw the government's desire to placate the IMF as another sign of their country's humiliation. Was not the Arab-Israeli peace supposed to improve conditions for ordi-

nary Jordanians?

It is extraordinary that the only two—Jordan and the Palestinians—to sign peace with Israel after the 1991 Gulf War, should be the only two men to have embraced Saddam after his invasion of Kuwait. Even more incredible is the way we journalists, in our euphoria at the supposed peace breaking out in the Middle East, simply erased these recollections from our copy. It is, of course, an essential act of memory cleansing. For keeping the historical record intact would have raised the one fact that has tormented and humiliated the Arabs since the "peace process" began in Madrid in the aftermath of the 1991 US victory in the Gulf: that to make peace with Israel, and be embraced by the United States, you must be weak, even discredited. The act of signing thus represented, for both Arafat and Jordan, survival.

If forgiveness is bestowed upon those who sign up for peace on Israel's terms, the other side of the Pax Americana is reserved for Israel's enemies. Iran is to be economically isolated, Iraq to be coaxed into further submission by UN sanctions and airstrikes. Syria, still on the State Department's list of countries that support "terrorism," is threatened with military attack by Israel. Sudan is isolated for its alleged support for "terrorism," while Qaddafi's impot dictatorship in Libya remains under UN blockade for its alleged involvement in the 1988 Lockerbie bombing.

As the prospect of a real peace steadily faded away, cynicism and suspicion take over. There is a real need, too, to find a scapegoat for the increasingly probable collapse of the whole process, especially after the electoral victory of Israel's right-wing Likud Party—and there is little doubt that the scapegoat will prove to be Syria. Even before the Likud victory, Shimon Peres had been setting up President Assad as a potential fall guy, arguing that he did not want peace because he had refused to accept the return of the Golan Heights in return for a full peace treaty. In fact, Assad never turned down such a proposal; the Golan was offered back by the Israelis with so many conditional clauses—an Oslo-style withdrawal by stages, of which Assad was understandably suspicious, and a demilitarization on the Syrian side that would, to Syrian eyes, have demoted Damascus itself of any defenses—that Assad could never have signed such a deal. This did not stop Israeli commentators, and their friends in the US media, from rediscovering the Demon of Damascus.

And so the Israeli pillar of the Pax Americana is ever more based upon raw military and political dominance. When that other arm of the Pax Americana—the "containment" policy against

Baghdad and Teheran—supposedly necessitated another strike against Saddam Hussein's barefoot army, we got President Clinton's latest Iraqi adventure. American retaliation for Saddam's military support of the Kurdistan Democratic Party was presented, at least in its initial days, as an act of firm leadership. Only after a week did it become clear that, despite the flurry of cruise missiles, the CIA's \$100 million project in northern Iraq—designed to topple Saddam—had collapsed, and the 1991 Gulf War coalition had effectively disintegrated.

The Saudis and their neighbors were obviously far more worried about their own domestic reaction to the US airstrikes than fearful of another invasion by Iraq's depleted army. Add to this the growing belief in the Middle East that election success for Israeli and US leaders appears to necessitate bombing Arabs—even if Shimon Peres's April onslaught in Lebanon went astray after the Qana bloodbath—and it's not difficult to understand why Defense Secretary William Perry received so little encouragement during his tour of the Middle East in mid-September.

The United States pays ritual obeisance to the idea of Arab "sensitivities" without understanding what those sensitivities really are. Arab distress at US cruise missile strikes does not spring from cowardice, nor from any secret admiration for the ghastly Saddam. It comes from something far deeper, something heartfelt and emotional about the very idea of Iraq. For Iraq contains what no other Arab nation possesses: both water and oil. Syria, Lebanon, Jordan and Egypt have water, but little or no oil; the Gulf Arabs have oil but no water. By comparison, Iraq represents a land of plenty, the ideal Arab nation whose naphtha means wealth and whose water means survival. And against this paradise—however mythical in the world of Realpolitik—President Clinton has been sending his missiles.

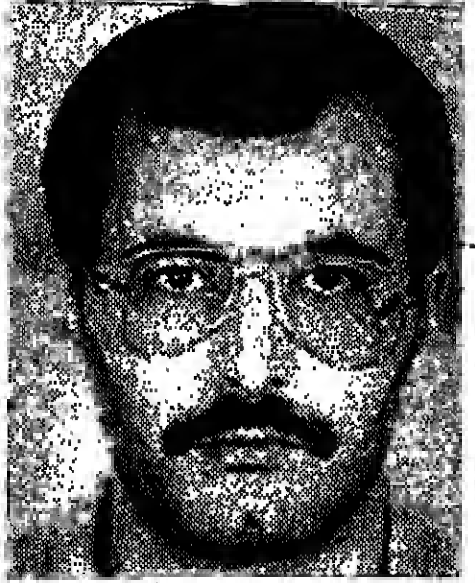
And now, as the "peace process" dies, frightening signs of mutual hatred and distrust between Jews and Muslims have emerged. Earlier this year an article in *Le Monde* by a leader of France's Jewish community was headlined "Islamist gangrene." On the opposite page, a cartoon showed a Muslim imam with octopus tentacles emerging from his cloak. In *The Jerusalem Post* an Israeli "security expert" is quoted referring to "hundreds of Iranian-directed Muslim militants... slobbering over the promised virgins waiting them to paradise." In the Arab world, a new fit of Holocaust denial has taken hold. Hitler's *Mein Kampf* has just been reprinted in Beirut and has already sold out in the shops. In Cairo, Roger Garaudy's *Les Mythes fondateurs de la politique israélienne*, which attempts to throw the very nature of the Holocaust into question, has been printed in Arabic for the first time. Garaudy himself has just been officially received in Lebanon, Syria and Jordan, feted by Arab intellectuals in all three countries and greeted by no less a figure than Vice President Abdul Halim Khaddam in Damascus.

In this poisonous atmosphere, we are still, remarkably, being asked to believe in the Middle East "peace process." The truth—that it is dead and may even have been stillborn—eludes us. Arafat's physical survival has long been in doubt, Jordan, locked into a flawed peace, looks increasingly precarious. The Arabs, if not their rulers, have understood this for months, which is why they give such a warm reception to European leaders who warn of the demise of peace and insist on the fulfillment of the UN resolutions that were supposed to underpin the whole exercise. Yet the United States, uncritically following Israel as usual, fails to grasp that the most important foreign policy initiative of the Bush and Clinton years is in pieces. Is it too late to go back and start again? Is it possible at this critical moment to reinsert land-for-peace—the return of all occupied land for total peace—into the negotiations? If not, many Arabs believe we are destined to suffer years of growing hatred between East and West, and increasing bitterness toward the United States as an uncritical ally of Israel. At the top of the newly elected President's list of foreign policy objectives should be five words: a new Middle East peace.

Robert Fisk, who is based in Beirut, is the Middle East correspondent for London's *The Independent*. ■



The 'peace of the braves' could be turning sour



Yahya Ayyash remembered



● Police and some people inspect the bus that was bombed in Damascus on the eve of the New Year. Nine people died and 44 injured. The Syrian authorities blamed the Israeli Mossad for the blast.

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LURIE'S WORLD



Christmas Tree, 1996

فكرنا من اننا سنحل

Business scene

■ The 1977 budget for the Industrial Cities Corp. is set at JD 7.5 million. The corporation aims to make 1997 a breaking year for industry. It has already bought land to the tune of JD 5.5 million throughout the country. The aim is to set up industrial areas in all the governorates in the country.

■ This country is becoming famous for its private health care. The Private Care Hospital Company is now declared at a JD 4 million. The hospital which is under construction will have 100 beds. About 98% of the paid-up capital is already paid and the establishment fees cost the company less than 0.8% of its capital. The hospital will take 18 months to complete.

■ Royal Wings, the local air shuttle service, has started a direct air route from Amman's Marka Airport to Haifa. This is a twice-weekly flight between the two cities. Royal Wings runs already five-weekly flights to Tel Aviv.

■ An Arab stock exchange could become a reality by the year 2000. An agreement has just been signed to link up the Oman, Cairo and Manama stock exchange in Bahrain. The link, probably the first of its kind in the Arab world, will make it easier for businessmen to trade on any one of these stock exchanges.

■ With the declaration of Al Sharq Al Arabi Insurance Co., the total number of operating insurance firms in the Kingdom reaches 25. After the completion of all registration procedures, Al Sharq Al Arabi was declared last week at a capital of JD 1.5 million. Until 1995 there were 17 insurance companies. The premiums generated by all insurance companies up till that year reached JD 78 million. Invested capitals in this sector hit JD 52.5 million, but they are expected to rise in the wake of the Insurance Law to request each insurance company to raise its capital to JD 2 million, by the end of this year.

Foreign Exchange

Wednesday, 8 January

	Buy JD	Sell JD
US Dollar	0.7080	0.7100
British Pound	1.1983	1.2043
Japanese Yen	0.4540	0.4563
Swiss Franc	0.5229	0.5255
German Mark	0.1344	0.1351
French Franc	0.6134	0.6165
Italian Lira	0.4048	0.4064
Spanish Peseta	0.0462	0.0462

investments follow a steady course, Al Rifai

By Ilham Sadeq
Star Staff Writer

IN THE light of the government's interest to create a better investment environment in Jordan and the growing foreign capital in the Kingdom, businessmen and investors are convinced that our economy is moving on the right track.

"I think that we have made a good progress to attract investments to Jordan and have achieved good percentage in this regard compared with Gross Domestic Product (GDP), Dr Taleb Al Rifai, director general of the Investment Promotion Corp., (IPC) told *The Star*.

"In 1995, we achieved a 30 percent investment rate, and this rate rose to 31 percent in 1996 which is a good increase," Dr Al Rifai continued.

However, we need to improve the infrastructure for such investments to give more space to productive services instead of real estates and construction, he pointed out.

Investments in the industrial, agricultural and tourist sectors increased by 35 percent. "This is a great progress compared to 1995," he added.

"The approved investments in these fields in 1996 hit JD 358 million compared to only JD 270 million in 1995; most of these were small and medium size investments, which is very healthy."

More and more foreign capital is coming to Jordan. About 21 percent of these investments is foreign, Dr Al Rifai pointed out. Indeed the IPC is doing its best to attract foreign capital.

The government wants the private sector to have a greater role in economic development. The new Investment Promotion Law of 1995 offers investors and businessmen a series of tax exemptions especially in the field of agriculture, hotels, hospitals.

AMMAN (Star)—In a press conference held last Sunday, Mr. Wahib Al Shaer, director general of the Amman Financial Market (AFM) said that despite the decline in traded volume and the fall in share prices during 1996, the increase in Arab and foreign investment activities at the AFM left its positive impact. The total of non-Jordanian investments hit JD 44 million covering selling and buying transactions.

Also the number of non-Jordanian companies that invested on the market last year increased to 19 compared to only nine companies in 1995, Al Shaer added.

Ratio of non-Jordanian traded stocks volume to the total dealings in the market in 1996 was 18 percent. Arab investors traded in JD 29 million, while foreign investors traded in JD 15 million.

In this regard, Al Shaer urged Jordanian investors to evaluate their investment portfolios, to cope with their foreign counterparts.

The stock dealings during 1996 resulted in a total of JD 248.6 million, registering a decline of 40.7% than 1995.

Issues of new shares in 1996 reached JD 187.7 million against JD 329.8 million in 1995, that is a fall of 43 percent.

Al Shaer attributed the drop in traded shares along with the decline in stock prices in 1996 to a series of factors and challenges facing AFM.

Among them the political events and developments due to the setbacks in the peace process in the region. Also the CBJ's strategy to raise the interest rates on deposits to maintain the dollar value and the shortage of liquidity available for investors have their negative influence on the performance of the market last year.

With respect to the new draft Securities Law

marine transport and railways.

"The investment projects that began in 1996 will generate not less than 6000 new job opportunities, and in this respect we do believe that investments have gone up," Dr Al Rifai explained.

"This is mainly due to the Investment Promotion Law which also provides attractive incentives for foreign investments.

According to the law, foreign investors can own up to 50 percent of companies in Jordan.

Non-Jordanian investors are also allowed to remit abroad and in a convertible currency income and profits from their invested capital in Jordan.

"We recognize the need for administrative reform and the ease of procedures to create more investments. It is more difficult to reform laws than to reform the administration of these laws because one is dealing with changing attitudes and mentalities of people and the public sector, Al Rifai said pointing out that it is a long term process that could not be achieved in a short time.

So far, great progress has been maintained, government agencies are under pressure to perform better and become more efficient. Also, the public demand for a better government is increasing, "we think that this is healthy. It is an expression of high expectations on part of our public and it is therefore legitimate."

Through cooperation and coordination with the government, the IPC established a personnel network to ease bureaucratic procedures and facilitate investments in every government agency where investments are relevant. Al Rifai added that as a government institution, we stress that it is necessary to perform better and live up to the challenges.



Al Rifai

Referring to the so-called dividends of the MENA summits (Casablanca, Amman and Cairo), Al Rifai said that the economic summits have to be understood in their proper context. "They are marks along the road, they are a process and not an end."

Their importance lies in the fact that they represent checkpoints where each country presents its record, and as we go along we understand this very well, he added.

Therefore, he continued, those summits have become motivators and opportunities to present what we have done and what we intend to do. Real business happens before or after such events.

Dr Al Rifai stressed that Jordan has benefited tremendously, regarding them as opportunities to perfect "national exercises" and deliver reforms that are necessary with or without such conferences.

Some analysts argue that the so-called dividends of peace held over the last three years, and after the peace treaty that was concluded between Jordanians and Israelis, have not yet materialized.



Summits are an eye-opener

Rather, they claim that the main beneficiary was Israel, who through these summits was allowed to achieve its goals to break the Arab embargo and receive more investments.

But other observers are optimistic and consider these summits as fruitful, arguing that at least we were able to acquaint other countries with investment opportunities in Jordan and give a greater role to the private sector.

"The projects submitted to the economic summits are never presented in a form that is final or ready for implementation. However, they are presented as a national agenda to work on and an eye-opener that would trigger our national investments," Al Rifai said.

He continued to explain that "when we talk about projects with such magnitude, we have to consider that triggering the interest and getting into serious negotiations to conclude agreements, is a process that takes considerable time. So it is not possible to present a record of achievements in such a short period of time."

As most analysts stress that political events have a strong impact on any economic development, Dr Al Rifai said that the Jordanian-Israeli peace treaty has not yet translated itself into real gains for Jordan. It is obvious that political considerations strongly affect any economic progress, he added.

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\$50 million finance loan for phosphate project

In cooperation with the Jordan Investment and Finance Bank (JIFB), the international investment group, HSBC, is arranging a joint loan worth \$50 million to finance part of the expansion projects carried out by the Jordan Phosphate Mines Co.

The British Bank, a subsidiary of HSBC, studied real investment opportunities in 1996 and presented offers to carry out some projects in the field of exploratory industries. Mr John Pasco, the executive chairman of British Bank in Jordan said.

Developing these industries in the Kingdom will enhance Jordanian exports and flourish the economy, he added.

The director of Jordan Phosphate earlier disclosed the company's plan to expand its productive capacity to eight million tons at a cost of \$250 million. The company indicated that some global financial institutions are willing to provide this project with the required funds.

Mr Pasco expressed satisfaction with the share of British Bank clients on the Amman Financial Market which stood for more than 50 percent of total Arab and foreign investments in 1996.

Most foreign investors at the AFM are British Bank clients and their share at the financial market has recorded a noticeable rise in the Regular and Paralel Markets, Mr Pasco maintained.

The tendency towards privatization in Jordan and the reduction made in restrictions on non-Jordanian investments in the country will certainly lead to a rise in foreign investments, he said. His deputy, Mr Edward Al Far revealed that the volume of investments owned by British Bank funds has recorded a rise of 103 percent in 1996 compared with 1995.

The number of British Bank clients who invest on the AFM has gone up by 120 percent, Al Far said adding that this is due to the foreign investment promotion encouraged by AFM.

As Chinese economy takes off, millions are left behind

By Steven Mufson
LA Times-Washington Post
News Service

BEIJING—In giant, broad brush strokes, the Chinese character for "demolish" is painted in white on the side of the house where retired rubber factory worker Tao Dechun has lived for 40 years beside central Beijing's picturesque and tranquil Houhai Lake.

Soon men with sledgehammers will tear apart Tao's modest courtyard house, ripping down its graceful sloping tile roof and understated gray bricks. Tao and his family will have to pack up their pet dogs, bicycles, and the other flotsam and jetsam of a humble life. They will can off the belongings—along with their more recently acquired television, space heater and CD player—to Beijing's distant, less convenient suburbs.

The Tao family is being forced to make way for richer people in the new, modern China. The Three Seas Real Estate company, a unit of the municipal government, is demolishing old Houshai homes and exiling residents nearby to build \$2 million to \$8 million luxury homes that will be sold to foreign executives, rich expatriate Chinese returning to make money and Chinese nationals who have struck gold during the economic reforms of the past two decades.

"The government doesn't care about the ordinary people anymore," grouched Tao, 61, who receives a \$50-a-month pension. His new apartment will be more spacious, but far from the lake, the old neighborhood and friends. His rent will rise tenfold. His children will face long commutes. And his grandchildren will transfer to inferior schools.

Tao's fate points to a wider issue: As China and other devel-

oping nations join the global economy and make great strides in reducing poverty, new tensions are rising from the ruins left behind. Hundreds of millions of Chinese people like Tao are better off than they were 20 years ago. But many of them remain dissatisfied, huffed by modernization, jealous of others' greater fortune, worried about rising crime and fearful that they will be pushed aside and jumble back into poverty.

Above all, successful development has created a conspicuous divide between rich and poor in some Asian countries, like China, and worsened it in others. That income gap separates people in China and around the world today as sharply as any border or ideology ever has.

The growth in inequality is inextricably linked to the new model of economic growth in the developing world, driven by huge increases in trade and private foreign investment. As developing countries have adopted free-market policies, privatized state industries and opened their borders, private firms and investors have poured \$420 billion into their economies since 1988. But as international trade and investment leap over national boundaries, it has become easier, too, for the problems of inequality and poverty to cross borders.

For governments of countries that have made great economic progress, that has made managing successful development as tough a challenge as presiding over deprivation—particularly in China, where the Communist Party has placed high political priority on both economic equality and growth.

To be sure, China's success in raising living standards over the past 20 years is by far the most compelling case of how free markets and free trade can work miracles where other development policies have failed. From the time of the

Communist takeover in 1949 through the late 1970s, China intentionally sealed itself off from the world economy, proclaiming self-sufficiency, and refused any foreign loans and investment because of its suspicions about the motives of Soviets and capitalists alike.

Between that isolationism and Communist Party Chairman Mao Zedong's misguided policies, as many as 40 million people starved to death between 1959 and 1961, the Shanghai University Journal has estimated. Even later, under the commune system, economic growth lagged. When Deng Xiaoping took power in 1978, he declared that socialism shouldn't be equated to poverty, and later the government coined the slogan "To get rich is glorious."

Since Deng threw open China's doors, a gust of foreign investment and technology has helped the world's most populous nation move into the modern age. By the end of 1995, there were 234,000 foreign-funded enterprises registered in China.

China is second only to the United States in its ability to draw direct foreign investment. And foreign-funded companies continue to increase their contributions to China's overall foreign trade; their share at the end of 1995 was 39.1 percent.

"International trade has stimulated competition and promoted skill development at a tremendous pace in this country," said Pieter Bontelier, chief representative of the World Bank in Beijing.

better and consumes more of everything from toasters to telephones, trousers to toys, cars to cognac.

According to government figures, the number of people living on less than 60 cents a day has declined from 270 million in 1978 to 65 million last year. The boom has created opportunities, and money has trickled down from the coastal boom towns to poorer inland regions.

Wu Mingtao, 23, is a painter at a construction site in eastern Beijing. He lives in a makeshift room with more than 40 other workers and can roll his belongings into a small sack, but he earns \$170 a month and sends virtually all of it back to his parents in Jiangsu Province, who have built themselves a two-story house in the countryside.

"I don't think of myself as poor," said Wu, who plans to return to Jiangsu after three more years with Beijing construction gangs.

But even more evident has been the growth of a new class of wealth. One symbol is the recently opened China Club, in what was previously Deng's favorite Sichuan-style restaurant. The club adds a touch of class to the capital of a country that was once obsessed with class struggle. At the formal opening, the British ambassador arrived in his Rolls-Royce, the Duchess of York came dressed in velvet, Kevin Costner and Michael Caine flew in, and dozens of local business executives attended.

Despite the steep price, more than 100 Chinese joined before it opened. "There's nothing wrong with elitism," said David Tang, the Hong Kong resident who planned the club. "Without elitism there would be no progress," he said with his Oxford accent as he stood puffing a cigar and greeting guests in his Chinese traditional silk suit.

MARKET WATCH

28 - 30 December

Highest and lowest performing stocks in the Amman Financial Market

SATURDAY	SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ↑ JIMCO 6.06 ↑ Plastic Weaving 5.45 ↑ Arab Center for Pharm. 5.26 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ↑ Naysak Mowids 6.00 ↑ International Trade 6.00 ↑ National Engineering Industries 4.26 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ↑ National Steel 5.08 ↑ Tajeeco 4.65 ↑ National Engineering Industries 4.08 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ↑ Namsco 5.88 ↑ Medical Appliances 5.00 ↑ National Portfolio 5.00
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ↓ Phosphate Mines 5.14 ↓ National Cables 5.09 ↓ Jordan Bank 5.00 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ↓ National Industries 5.56 ↓ Kuwaiti Bank 5.09 ↓ Jordan Wooded Mills 4.90 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ↓ Jordan Rockwood Industries 4.65 ↓ Int'l Textile Manufacturing 4.26 ↓ Arab International Hotels 3.85 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ↓ Jordan Tanning 3.76 ↓ Rafia Industrial 3.50 ↓ Jordan Sulphur Chemicals 3.49

General Price Pointer	151.610	151.650	152.440	153.570
Trade Volume	1064512	1641640	2260398	2747270
Stock Volume	543356	915182	1111786	1414270

Highest Traded Stocks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ↑ Jordan Investment Bank 559000 ↑ Development Bank 547774 ↑ The Housing Bank 931623 ↑ Hotels and Tourism 715488
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Palestine Post

Hamdan continues to be kept in Israeli custody

■ On 24 December, Birzeit University student Mohammed Abdel-Aziz Hamdan was issued with a four-month order of administrative detention ending 62 days of interrogation by the Israeli General Security Service.

Mr Hamdan's case received worldwide attention following a 14 November decision by the Israeli High Court allowing interrogators to use physical force and other abusive methods in his interrogation. At the end of this extended and often abusive interrogation, Mr Hamdan was not charged with any offense. (Administrative detention is detention without charge or trial.) Mr Hamdan, a Birzeit University educational diploma student from Ramallah district, was arrested from his home on 7 October, 1996, issued with a four-month order of administrative detention, and taken to Megiddo Prison. On 24 October, Israeli authorities transferred Mr Hamdan from Megiddo to the Russian Compound in Jerusalem for interrogation. On the same day, lawyer Theodore first heard of his detention on 11 November. Theodore visited Mr Hamdan in the Russian Compound on the same day and took from him an affidavit. Theodore immediately shared this information with lawyer Andre Rosenthal and asked that Rosenthal appeal to the High Court for an injunction against the use of violence.

According to the affidavit, Mr Hamdan reached the Russian Compound on Thursday, 24 October at 2:00 am. He was transferred directly into interrogation by six Israeli General Security Services (GSS) agents.

On three separate occasions before an injunction was issued, interrogators violently shook Mr Hamdan while he was tied to a chair with his hands behind him and his head tilted backwards. During the first eleven days of interrogation Mr Hamdan spent most of the time tied to a small chair with his hands and legs cuffed and a filthy hood placed over his head. He was beaten each time he fell asleep and thereby was prevented from sleeping for more than approximately two hours every three days. Interrogators reportedly threatened Mr Hamdan that he would leave their custody only dead or paralyzed. Rosenthal submitted a petition to the Israeli High Court of Justice for an injunction against the use of violence by the GSS on Wednesday, 13 November. At this time the GSS agreed to suspend the use of violence. The following day, however, 14 November, the GSS returned to the High Court to request the revocation of the injunction on the grounds that the defendant "possessed" extremely vital information the immediate procurement of which would help save human lives and prevent serious terrorist attacks in Israel and therefore made it "necessary" to interrogate Mr Hamdan without restraint. The High Court granted the request and revoked the injunction.

Mr Hamdan, who had now been held by the Israeli authorities for 38 days, was returned to the Russian Compound for continued interrogation. In two visits following this Mr Hamdan reported to

his lawyers that the interrogators have returned to the previous techniques including one episode of violent shaking, and prolonged sleep deprivation.

On 20 November Mr Hamdan was remained in custody for 21 days, a period ending on 10 December. He remains until today in the custody of the General Security Services. This remand was appealed on 28 November and the appeal was rejected. Between 26-28 November, Mr Hamdan was taken by the General Security Services to the Lebanese border and threatened with deportation. He was then returned to the Russian Compound for interrogation.

His detention was extended for a third time on 10 December for 15 days. In the appeal against this extension the judge in the appeal court ordered that at the end of 15 days (24 December) Mr Hamdan either be charged or released.

On 17 December after more than one-month of interrogation "without restrictions", the High Court—with the agreement of the General Security Services—reinstated the injunction against the use of violence in interrogation.

On 24 December Mr Hamdan was issued with a new four-month order of administrative detention. Administrative detention is detention without charge or trial.

Netanyahu faces cabinet revolt over Hebron policy

By Nicholas Goldberg
LA Times, Washington Post News Service

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM—During the campaign for prime minister last spring, Limor Livnat—a member of parliament and a longtime Likud Party stalwart—was one of Benjamin Netanyahu's closest advisers and staunchest supporters. When he was elected, she was rewarded with a Cabinet appointment as Israel's minister of communications.

But the brief honeymoon is moving quickly toward trial separation: Livnat announced last week that she intended to break with her old friend and oppose the impending deal on Hebron, under which Israeli troops would be withdrawn from a substantial portion of that violence-prone West Bank city.

"I joined the Likud 26 years ago, not for this person or the other—but as a result of my conscience," she explained. "My inclination now is to vote against the agreement. It is a bad arrangement which does not afford the Jewish settlers the necessary degree of security."

Livnat is not alone. In fact, of 18 members of Netanyahu's Cabinet, seven already have announced that they will vote against the agreement, if and when it is finalized and presented to them for their endorsement. On Thursday, Justice Minister Tzachi Hanegbi said he, too, was considering withdrawing his support if Netanyahu commits Israel to a timetable for withdrawing from other parts of the West Bank. And on Friday, two ministers from the Shas Party said they were considering abstaining or voting no.

If all 10 ministers followed through on their threats, the agreement would be rejected by the Cabinet.

"There's a serious problem brewing," acknowledged David Bar-Ilan, Netanyahu's senior policy adviser. "The question is how adept the prime minister is going to be in getting people to support him. In the past he's proved more than adept, a master at this kind of thing. We're quite confident he'll be able to repeat this performance."

Technically, the Cabinet vote is not binding.



Going crazy: Last week Israeli soldier Noam Friedman started shooting at Palestinians in Hebron. Six were wounded, two of the seriously

government officials say. There is no law requiring Netanyahu to have his ministers vote on the pact, and no law requiring him to abide by their decision. It is a matter of tradition only, begun when the late prime minister Menachem Begin brought the Camp David peace accords to the Cabinet for approval. What's more, many people believe the Cabinet uprising will, in the end, come to naught—that at the last minute, Netanyahu will be able to convince a majority of his ministers that they have little choice but to stick by him.

But politically, the rebellion in the Cabinet is a serious and telling blow. Just as he has had to prove to the world that he can reach a deal with

the Palestinians, Netanyahu must also prove to Israelis that he can hold his own government together. Already, the dissension is limiting his flexibility in negotiations. If it coalesces it may mean that his coalition Cabinet—a mixed bag of religious party leaders, hard-line rightists who want to kill the Oslo peace process and centrists who hope to slow it down—is in peril of collapse, and that the diverse groups that swept him into power may prove incompatible and ultimately unstable.

"His problem is that he was elected by a tiny, tiny margin, and he knows that if he wants to stay in power and be re-elected, he has to govern from the center," said Reuven Hazan, a profes-

sor of political science at Hebrew University in Jerusalem. "But on the other hand, if he signs the agreement, he's bringing about the death of the major principles on which the Likud Party was created—that land belongs to Israel, and that Hebron is the second holiest city after Jerusalem. If Netanyahu signs a redeployment agreement, he's throwing their ideology into the trash can. And half of his Cabinet cannot live comfortably with that."

Under the agreement, the final details of which are still being negotiated, Israel would turn over 80 percent of Hebron to the Palestinian National Authority—as it had promised to do in the Oslo II agreements signed last year by prime minister Shimon Peres. The remaining 20 percent of the city, including neighborhoods where some 400 Jewish settlers live and where the tomb of prophet Abraham is located, would remain under Israeli control. Palestinian President Yasser Arafat is also pushing Netanyahu for a formal commitment and a timetable for further redeployment to the West Bank in the months ahead.

Netanyahu is far from enthusiastic about any of this, but under diplomatic pressure from the United States, economic pressure from international investors, and political pressure from the majority of Israelis who badly want a deal to be reached, he has been moving, albeit reluctantly and veering toward a deal.

"It's really amazing when you think about it," said David Makovsky, a columnist for the *Jerusalem Post*. "If you had told Netanyahu a year ago that he would be shaking hands with Arafat and declaring fealty to Oslo and negotiating a pullout from Hebron, he would have said, 'You're on drugs.'"

Indeed, that appears to be the opinion of many of Netanyahu's Cabinet ministers.

"I never imagined that a government of the national camp would adopt the same policy as its predecessors and encourage the Arab hopes of obliterating the Jews of Hebron," wrote Agriculture Minister Rafael Eitan, leader of the *Tsomet* Party in a letter to Netanyahu last week.

Saudi scandal which made headlines in the Egyptian press

By the Editor

THE CHECK no.2883/Bank of Alexandria/Cairo/17/10/96 of Egyptian Pounds 482,379 received by Mamdouh Al Leithy, the head of the Production Sector of the Egyptian TV and one of the leading officials of the Ministry of Information from Saudi Sheikh Abdel Aziz Ibrahim Al Ibrahim to pay for a new Mercedes T 200 as a gift is the spark which led to unleashing the Saudi Scandal that made headlines in Egypt.

According to *Rose Al Youssef* magazine, which is one of the leading Egyptian outspoken magazines there are a total of 12 New Mercedes which were presented as a gift as the magazine indicated to Egyptian Officials and personalities.

Rose Al Youssef said Mr Al Mamdouh Al Leithy who is outraged by the revelation sued the magazine but the leading

Egyptian Lawyers and the Egyptian Press Syndicate stood by the writer of the story Mr Adel Hamouda who is encouraged to go on and reveal a full documented scandal of how Saudi money is used to corrupt artistic circles in Egypt and abuse the moral standards of Egyptian society.

Sheikh Abdel Aziz Ibrahim Al Ibrahim, is brother of Sheikh Walid Ibrahim Al Ibrahim and both of them are the youngest billionaires who have access to billions of dollars as their sister is the wife of King Fahd whose personal fortune exceeds the fortunes of the richest man in the world. Sheikh Walid runs in London the MBC, a Saudi television station, which is rival to Egyptian Television and he spends billions of dollars on it to make it a cultural Saudi forum but he discovered that it cannot stand alone without the help and

expertise of Egyptian TV and Film industry which leads the TV and film industry in all the Arab World. Sheikh Walid hit two birds with one stone when he employed the son of Mamdouh Al Leithy as the Chief of the MBC office in Cairo.

Through this appointment the miracle billionaire boy Sheikh Walid believed that he can take control of Egyptian TV production, and in fact he could make some influence to force the Egyptian TV to produce a notorious TV series based on a novel written by the Saudi Ambassador to London Mr Ghazi Al Qoussaby. The *Freedom Apartment* is considered by *Rose Al Youssef* and leading Egyptian literary circles as containing an insult to Egypt, its society and leaders.

Rose Al Youssef said Mr Al Qoussaby's novel which portrays his experience during his

study in Cairo cannot be considered from any angel a work of art. *Rose Al Youssef* said that this novel shows the hero "indulged with prostitutes as if he was sent to Cairo for this purpose." *Rose Al Youssef* said also that this novel showed the ignorance of the now Saudi Ambassador to London when he said in his novel that the British evacuation was a result of the struggle of the Muslim Brothers! The production of the series went on and guess who wrote the scenario of the series which contain lies and defamations of the Egyptian Society? The scenario was written by Mr Mamdouh Al Leithy and supervised by his son.

The whole of Egypt was outraged with these novel TV series but silence prevailed for some time until the storm started to unleash the scandal of the Saudi money. 12 New Mercedes were presented to TV

official and Egyptian personalities as a reward for doing this crime.

Mr Mamdouh Al Leithy is now on trial for accepting a bribe as public sector official. The story did not end here but a bigger scandal was revealed. Saudi Sheikh Abdel Aziz Ibrahim Al Ibrahim who is running a business in Cairo benefited from his brother influence in the Egyptian TV and as young Saudi businessman with millions of dollars under his command was introduced, and you can guess by whom, to a young beautiful actress her name Sherin Seif Al Nassr. Immediately she was released without penalty from an engagement in an Egyptian TV production to be free so that he can spend some time with her.

The Sheikh, following the Saudi tradition, marries the beautiful actress a marriage of convenience which means to

the petro dollars morals a marriage for money for a fixed period. The second scandal began when Mr Salah Kabaday, chief editor of *Al Ahram* newspaper, revealed that the Saudi Sheikh Abdel Aziz took his pride address in a private airplane to Luxor, one of the most famous tourist sites in the World in upper Egypt. Mr Salah said that when their airplane arrived at Luxor they were received officially by the Chairman of the Council of the City of Luxor and members of the Council.

Mr Salah indicated that the Sheikh was arriving in a private mission to have a good time and to be received officially is a scandal and called for the name of the higher official who ordered this official reception to be named.

MSANews

Gaza through the eyes of an Israeli journalist

By Judith Colp Rubin

AMIRA HASS is exasperated when told how brave she was to live alone for three years in Gaza Strip. "Israelis should ask themselves why they would think this," says the former Gaza correspondent for *Ha'aretz*. "Gazans know Israelis. They look at us as three-dimensional, and not one-dimensional creatures. They know us better than we know them."

Not so, Hass, the only journalist to have both lives and worked openly as an Israeli in Arafat's Gaza. In a new book, *Drinking the Sea at Gaza*, published in Hebrew by Kibbutz Ha'meuchad, she describes in detail her life in a place most of her countrymen know only through the eyes of soldiers and the General Security Service.

As she sips a late-night coffee in her Tel Aviv apartment, the 40-year-old Hass exhibits equal measures of sympathy and toughness. She is dressed severely in black pants and a black jacket, with the only colour coming from a small felt rose-pin and a rust-coloured, fringed scarf tied around her neck keffiyeh-style. Her hair is short, dark and curly, and she is bespectacled. In moments of contemplative silence, she pulls at several silver rings on her fingers.

Her knowledge of Gaza—all gleaned on the job—is as impressive as any academic's. She can reel off numbers and statistics, and the hometowns of Hamas activists. Her tremendous sympathy for the Palestinian plight becomes quickly apparent, and she is quick to sour when she believes anyone is "practicing an ideology of racism and superiority." But she smarts at any suggestion that such strong political beliefs might have adversely affected her reporting.

"The rest of the journalist is to present

reality as it is," says Hass. "Many people know today that what I wrote three years ago is accurate."

The title of her book comes from a favourite saying of Yasser Arafat, that anyone who opposes a Palestinian state can "drink from the sea of Gaza"—in other words: "go to hell."

"It's a title on many different levels which I let the reader play with," says Hass. "One level is how the dreams and visions of Gazans have not been fulfilled. Another is how I shared with them the hard times. But I also mock Israelis who say 'Go to Gaza,' as a way of saying 'Go to hell.'"

Hass takes a "sociological approach" in her writings, attempting to show the human side of the problems among the sizable refugee population. As the child of European refugees herself, she says she empathizes with the Palestinians' plight.

"It was a indelible discovery to see all this suffering and misery, and amid it all meet great people who have big hopes. There's a cynical self-humor among Gazans that I find very touching. They don't take themselves too seriously."

For example, when a friend from a refugee camp wanted to buy her car, Hass initially agreed, then changed her mind. "I've made two big mistakes in my life," said her friend. "One, that I was born; the other that I made an agreement with a Jewish woman. According to the Koran, one shouldn't make an agreement with a Jew because it doesn't stand up."

Hass tells the story with a laugh. "It's a kind of black or ghetto humour. It's a joke with many levels—it mocks tradition while expressing the sense that there's no meaning to life. As a child of Holocaust survivors, I can relate to it."

She also witnessed moments of pure joy among the Palestinians, such as when

the Israeli army redeployed from Gaza two years ago. Hass was in the Jabalya refugee camp, which was celebrating the first time in years there was no curfew. She remembers the air was heavy with the smell of frying *falafel*, and the residents driving into Gaza City when it was pitch-dark because it was still under curfew.

The difference was so sharp and I felt my friends were testing this new life at night," says Hass. She quickly adds. "It was normal to go out, everybody goes out. It's a Mediterranean culture. People revert to normal behavior very quickly."

Hass believes Gaza's problems are linked to economics. The closure imposed by Israel, she says, affects all spheres of society and shows the extent to which, despite the peace agreement, Israel "still controls the lives of Palestinians."

"I met a couple, she's 35, he's 50. She got a permit to receive fertility treatment and he didn't," says Hass. "I really came across such things every day: students who couldn't go to study, women who couldn't visit their grand children, sick people who couldn't get treatment. The whole nation has a permanent sense of feeling dishonored."

In particularly tragic cases, Hass says she tried to intervene. When the mother of a Gazan friend was dying in a Tel Aviv hospital, Hass helped obtain visiting permits for the woman's husband and daughter.

Writing about Gaza was a natural outgrowth of Hass's upbringing.

Her mother, Hannah, was born in Sarajevo. A fighter during World War II, she was captured by the Germans and sent to the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp. She later published a diary of her experiences during the war in the 1960s. Her father, Abraham, spent the war in a

Romanian ghetto where the harsh winter froze off his toes.

As an only child growing up in Jerusalem, and later Tel Aviv, Hass says the Holocaust was a natural part of her childhood. "I never had the guilt or shame complex that other children (of Holocaust survivors) have."

Her parents taught her "never to pose questions to the victim." When her mother's book was published in Germany, an interviewer asked Hannah Hass, "How the Jews could be killed like that?"

Says Hass: "I remember her responding, 'How could the Germans kill like this? You always have to refer the question not to the victim, but to the victimizer.'"

Equally important to her parents' identity was their membership in the Communist Party. Hass was "a red-diaper baby," who grew up immersed in Communist ideology and she learned a philosophy that still permeates her rhetoric and thinking.

She was working on a degree in Holocaust studies at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem until she decided to drop the subject. "When you're a child you tend to accept things. I grew up grasping how terrible it was. But I came to a point where I just couldn't bear it anymore."

Looking for a job, she found a position as a subeditor at *Ha'aretz* in 1989. She also dabbled in reporting, and when the Communist government fell in Romania,



Hass paralyzed her childhood knowledge and contacts there into an assignment for the newspaper.

Although Hass has taken Arabic courses, her knowledge of the language is still very rough and she does most of her interviews in Hebrew and English. In 1993 she became *Ha'aretz's* correspondent in Gaza. She decided to move there, and the newspaper picked up the tab for her accommodation. She still marvels that anyone would wonder that it wasn't "easier and logical," to live there.

Hass eventually rented an apartment in Gaza's fashionable Rimal neighbourhood. She took other foreign women as roommates since the apartments there, built for big families, are large and hard to clean. Her first apartment was a mere \$250 a month, although prices rose after the Oslo accords.

Hass says her biggest frustration was dealing with Gaza's not infrequent electricity shortages and dead phone lines that almost led to a journalist's worst

nightmare—missing deadlines. But this only happened once during three years of nearly daily reporting, which included the end of Israeli occupation, civil strife and the rise of the suicide bombers.

Hass is now planning her next move to Ramallah, where she will report on the West Bank. In the meantime, she is dealing with the requisite interviews and book parties spurred by the release of *Drinking the Sea at Gaza*.

As for leaving Gaza behind, she says "It became thing, that's all. I didn't plan on moving to Gaza forever. I missed going to films and concerts in the evening and driving 80 kilometers just like that. Gaza is a big jail and you are confined to (a very small) area. People can't move. They see television and they're connected to the Internet, and they see the big difference between what life offers, and what actually happens in reality."

JP Magazine

Former Beatle will become Sir Paul McCartney

By Fred Barbash
LA Times-Washington Post
News Service

LONDON—Paul McCartney, the former Beatle, is to become Sir Paul McCartney. The announcement of the honor—the first knighthood for an ex-Beatle—came nearly four decades after the group took the world by storm, put Britain on the pop music map, revolutionized rock-and-roll and became one of the nation's leading exporters.

It came roughly three decades after the Beatles' breakup, in 1970, which was also about the time people here started wondering when John, Paul, George or Ringo would become Sir John, Sir Paul, Sir

George or Sir Ringo, receiving the title bestowed on hundreds of lesser souls ranging from singer Cliff Richard to Beatles producer George Martin to any number of political hacks and dedicated but faceless bureaucrats.

Even McCartney himself had begun to wonder about it. "There's a guy who's a deejay called Jimmy Savile," he told a *Newsweek* interviewer last year. "There's Andrew Lloyd Webber. All these people are sirs. Sir Cliff Richard. But you can't sit around saying, 'God, I wish they'd make me a sir'."

Monday, in a statement issued while vacationing abroad, McCartney, 54, said it was "a fantastic honor and I am very grateful receiving it on behalf of all the peo-

ple of Liverpool and the other Beatles, without whom it wouldn't have been possible."

McCartney and John Lennon, who was murdered in New York in 1980, were the Beatles' most prolific songwriters, creating, among numerous others, "Please Please Me," "I Want to Hold Your Hand," "All My Loving," "Can't Buy Me Love," "Hey Jude," "Michelle" and "Let It Be."

Those songs—indeed, almost all the Beatles' songs—are still topping the charts today, having been re-released in such different forms as "Live at the BBC" and "The Beatles Anthology." This year, in fact, 20 million Beatles records have been sold, more than in any previous year and more than any other pop group in the

world. More than 40 percent of the purchasers are teen-agers, a testament to the band's power to attract new audiences. Meanwhile, some 418 million people in 94 countries watched a documentary about the band this year. Record and video sales along with TV rights are estimated to total \$780 million this year.

Even after leaving the Beatles, McCartney has remained extremely popular, selling millions more records solo and with his band Wings, which lasted from 1970 to 1980. McCartney also holds the record for the greatest number of discs by a single artist to go gold and platinum—75—according to the Guinness Book of World Records.

Entertainers have been prominent recipients of knighthoods—Richard Burton, Alec Guinness, Laurence Olivier. But as those names suggest, such honors have generally gone to those considered serious stars of the theater or film rather than to rock-and-rollers. Cliff Richard, a pop singer better known in Britain, was one of the few exceptions and was said to have gotten his because he is a favorite of the Queen Mother and has always been considered a "squeaky clean" public figure.

Groups like the Rolling Stones and the Beatles, however, have at one time or the other stood for teen-age rebellion, the counterculture or the drug culture. McCartney himself, after leaving the Beatles, upset some British politicians by recording a single called "Give Ireland Back to the Irish."

In the past few years, however, Liverpool boosters, as well as some members of Parliament, have publicly campaigned to honor the surviving Beatles. David Alton, a Liberal Democrat MP from Liverpool, formally nominated McCartney—in a procedure Prime Minister John Major encouraged—saying that he and the other Beatles had "earned considerable sums of money for the country" and brought it great distinction in the world of entertainment. Nigel Evans, a Conservative MP, helped the campaign across party lines: he called it a "great populist move" when he urged Major to include McCartney last year.

(While the queen formally bestows what are called the "honors" here, the honors list



McCartney makes it into the establishment at last

is largely the work of the political leadership, at the moment Prime Minister Major.

McCartney's highly publicized philanthropy—he contributed more than \$1.5 million for a performing arts school in Liverpool—undoubtedly helped make him the first honored among the Beatles.

The Beatles had received one of the lower honors in the 1960s (an MBE—Member, Order of the British Empire). But John Lennon publicly returned his in 1969 as a protest, in part against British support of the United States in the Vietnam War—which, conceivably, is a reason no Beatle has been honored until now.

Another reason could be Lennon's later claim that the Beatles were "stoned" when they received the MBE at Buckingham Pal-

ace. Yet another might be the group's performance before the queen in 1963—at a royal gala—when Lennon, before introducing "Twist and Shout," asked the audience for help: "The people in the cheaper seats, clap your hands," he said. Then, glancing toward the royal box, he added, "And the rest of you, just rattle your jewelry."

The McCartney knighthood was announced last Monday on the annual New Year's list—the actual ceremony will come later.

Among the other honors announced was the elevation to the House of Lords of Andrew Lloyd Webber (creator of "Phantom of the Opera" and "Evita," among other sensations) and an Order of the British Empire to Joan Collins, author, litigant and actress. ■



The Beatles down memory lane: (left to right), George, Paul, Ringo and John

French shoppers set sale for annual post-holiday frenzy

By Anne Swardson
LA Times-Washington Post
News Service

PARIS—Mark this down: The French government says holiday sales can now begin.

In France, the government not only owns the airline, runs the railroad and operates a bank, it also is in charge of post-Christmas sales. Priced-cutting after the holidays is common practice around the world, but here it is the political heirs of Louis XIV who determine when and how merchandise can be discounted.

By law, stores are allowed to offer merchandise below cost only twice a year—during this post-Christmas period and in the six-week summer sale season. And a law passed last year set stricter terms for what constitutes a sale: The goods must have been bought by the

store at least 30 days before, not brought in and instantly marked down.

The thousands of eager consumers who rushed into Paris department stores and boutiques Friday morning, as the official sale season kicked off, have precisely six weeks—down from eight last year—to make their discount purchases.

Some 2,000 inspectors from the Federal Competition, Consumption and Repression of Fraud Directorate were at work in stores, making sure labels on sale products were for genuine discounts and that only previously offered merchandise was on sale and that the time limit had been adhered to.

In recent weeks, dozens of fines were issued to stores that started their sales too early. Violators of the starting date or merchandise rules can be

fined \$5,000 to \$20,000.

"If a government inspector came in yesterday and we had no sales, we would have been charged a fine," said a spokeswoman for Le Bon Marche, a major department store.

The regulation of sales is just one visible example of how the approach France takes to capitalism diverges sharply, even in these days of globalization and free trade, from those of its Anglo-Saxon neighbors and allies.

This is a nation that has brought up on state control of economic activity, from tariffs on canals in the 18th century to state-owned enterprises today. Sales have been regulated since 1906, when merchants were required to get authorization from the mayor to liquidate their inventories.

It also shows the relationship between the French government and the governed French: protective and paternalistic, with a healthy dose of favors for business thrown in.

The law "is to avoid too much competition between merchants," said Bernard Chartier of Paris's city administration office, which is responsible for setting the kick-off date for the sale season.

The date is carefully selected in consultation with merchant and consumer associations, he said. This year, sales started on Thursday in other regions of France and Friday in Paris; both were a week later than usual.

In the United States, it goes without saying, sales are treated as a voluntary transaction between buyer and seller. "We don't regulate sales," said Pamela Rucker, director of media relations for the National Retail Federation. "I am not aware of any regulation on any level, state or federal, that regulates when a retailer can mark down



goods."

French consumer groups, not a strong lobby in any case, are focusing their efforts this sale season on making sure the items offered are really on sale and not shoddy merchandise brought in just for the discount period.

Little concern has been apparent over whether consumers ought to be allowed to pay less during the rest of the year if a retailer wishes to lower his prices.

In a sense, the sale law fits with the general French tendency to do the same thing at the same time. A people who vacation only in August, and largely stay in France, are likely to have little complaint with doing their shopping all at once. By some estimates, one-half of all French consumer purchases are made during the two sale seasons.

Expert shoppers visit stores beforehand, try on merchandise, select the size and color they want, then come in the morning of Day 1 and rush out with their goods. Stores all over Paris were mobbed Friday, with huge crowds mass-

ing outside stores even before opening time. At C&A, a mid-price clothing chain, customers stood in line for 20 minutes at the cash register, holding huge baskets filled with clothing they were buying.

"We are anticipating about 100,000 people a day," compared with a norm of about 60,000, said Evelynne Le Roux, spokeswoman for Galeries Lafayette, one of Paris's largest department stores. "We have sale merchandise in every department."

Some discounting is allowed during non-sale season, as long as items are not sold below cost. How can infractions be found out?

"If there is a suspicion, the inspector checks the [whole-sale] bill," said a spokesman for Jean-Pierre Raffarin, the cabinet minister for small- and medium-size businesses, who sponsored the changes in the sale law.

For anyone who somehow does not participate now, the date for the next sale season already has been set: June 27 to Aug. 7. ■

Angel with a baby face

By Frank Rizzo
LA Times-Washington Post
News Service

NEW YORK—John Travolta gives a wicked angelic smile, so fitting for his latest role as a famous cherub with some bad habits in the movie "Michael," opening on Christmas.

"He's an angel, not a saint," reads the slogan for the film in which Travolta plays the Archangel, complete with slightly soiled wings, who is sent to Earth to bring two lonely people together (William Hurt and Andie MacDowell) and, while he's here, enjoys himself with a good drink, some smokes and a little motel love.

The premise is intriguing but when it comes to discussing matters spiritual, Hollywood theology gets well, murky.

"Who wrote the rules on angels?" asks Travolta during a recent series of interviews to promote the film.

"Whether it's biblical or historical, no one says angels in the flesh couldn't have had (sensual) experiences," says the actor, who was raised a Catholic and is now a Scientologist.

(The cast of the film could make up an ecumenical conference: MacDowell is raised Baptist and is now an Episcopalian; Jean Stapleton is a Christian Scientist; director Nora Ephron is Jewish; and Hurt favors Eastern spirituality.)

"I think that's a funny idea," says Travolta, quoting the Gospel. According to Nora, "What if our so-called beloved angels—when they inhabit the flesh, they just go for it? But they don't forget their job. They have things

to do. So as long as they don't go too far. Just because you like sex and food doesn't make you a bad person. Maybe this takes the onus off what goodness is. OK, he likes to have a drink, smoke and have sex, but can't he still be a decent fellow who gets his job done?"

Does he believe in angels?

"I don't know if I literally believe in them," he says, as smooth as the fabric of his gray tailored suit. "But I believe in them conceptually or metaphorically."

Travolta says he believes more in earth-bound angels.

"I felt that my first and second managers are kind of like guardian angels for me in the flesh—overlooking my career, my well-being, my survival," says the Englewood, N.J., native. "And then there were my parents when I was younger."

For the role of the carnal angel, Travolta, who turns 43 in February, allowed himself to be filmed rather than in a studio.

"I'm not going to fool you," he says. "I only lose weight for movies."

For the film, he weighed around 220 pounds, which he says is not far from what he would weigh if he didn't have to Slimfast down for most of his movies.

The angels seem to be on Travolta's side these days. Since the success of 1994's "Pulp Fiction," last year's "Get Shorty" and the less-than-great "White Man's Burden," Travolta this year came out with "Broken Arrow," "Phenomenon," and now, "Michael."

Next year is going to be even busier with "She's De Lovely," directed by Nick Cassavetes (John Cassavetes' son), "Mad City," directed by Sean Penn

and Robin Wright in "Face/Off," directed by John Woo ("Broken Arrow") with Nicolas Cage and Joan Allen.

And he's about to take the lead in "Primary Colors," directed by Mike Nichols and co-starring Emma Thompson and Kathy Bates. After that, he moves on to the film version of "A Civil Action" based on a book by Jonathan Harr.

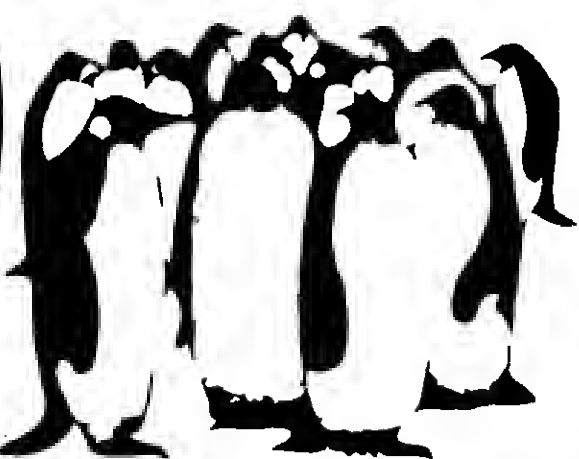
He also says a science-fiction film is in the works based on a book by Church of Scientology creator L. Ron Hubbard, called "Battlefield Earth." "I'd like to make it and it's scheduled for next year but I don't have a director yet, just a script," he says.

Travolta says he feels blessed that his 20-year film career has taken off again, allowing him to play in such wide-ranging projects, most recently at \$20 million a pop (though he cuts his price for small films he wants to do).

"This is not the time to take a break. It's time to indulge your artistry," he says. "It's a blast." ■



President
ALBERTO L.
FUJIMORI
of Peru

AROUND
TOWNCelebrating Flame
of Peace

● Pictured in front of the nativity scene at the Forte Grand Hotel are the Austrian folklore group from the region of Ober Österreich.

Every year, a young orphan child visits Bethlehem to collect a Flame of Peace to bring back to Austria. From there on, the flame is traditionally sent to European states. For the first time, in 1996, the flame was brought back to Amman. It was presented to His Majesty King Hussein and then taken to the SOS Children's village.

In celebration of this, Forte Grand Amman, in association with Al Ahlia-Abela, put on an Austrian promotion event with food and entertainment.



Cuban Art Week

Creating self-sufficient symbolism

By Anca De Maio
Special to The Star

The Cuban Art Week in Amman was a major success. It introduced Cuban cultural images and traditions to Jordan. The event, which consisted of contemporary plastic art exhibitions, photography and the showing of three films, was held on the occasion of the Cuban National Day on 1st January. Abdul Hameed Shoman Foundation hosted the activity at its Muntada in Jabal Amman in conjunction with the Cuban Embassy.

The Cuban Ambassador to Jordan, Mr Ernesto Gomez Abascal said that "the present painting exhibition is the most representative sample of 20th century Cuban art ever displayed in the Middle East." "Fifty reproductions of the best pieces of the most famous Cuban painters of the century have been chosen to be introduced to the Jordanian public."

He went on to say that the original paintings make part of the permanent collection of the Museo de Bellas Artes de Cuba. "The aim of the collection is to offer a large variety of artistic forms and styles whose common denominator is the deeply-rooted national culture. The originality of this culture has been enriched through centuries by various convergent factors and different mark-leaving migrations," Abascal pointed out.

Famous artists of the Cuban "Vanguardia"

such as Victor Manuel (1897-1969), Amelia Pelaez (1896-1968) and Carlos Enriquez (1900-1957), distinguished themselves between the '20s and the '40s by opposing "academicism". They imposed new forms on national contents: typically Cuban landscapes with their unique light and colors (Pelaez) and ethnically-mixed human features as in Enriquez' las Mulatas (half-caste women) and Manuel's las gitanas (gypsies). The artistic trajectory of the generation of Mariano Rodriguez (1912-1990) and Rene Portocarrero (1912-1980) was oriented to sublimating the Cuban "essence" into self-sufficient symbols. Rich in colors and forms, the roster is the recurrent theme of Rodriguez' creation conveying realistic representations into essential symbols. Portocarrero's originality consists in expressing the Cuban sensibility through a surprising Baroque floral art of the portrait. His women profiles are primarily flowers and forests, or stylized labyrinth-like delicate lace.

Among the newer generation representatives, Manuel Mendive (1994) and Folra



Fong (1949) stand out for the original reading they give to cultural and historical values. A master of ancient and ultramodern techniques, Mendive translates the complex symbolism of the Island's myths into an intellectualized artistic world that is mysteriously infused with primitive African traditions. Fong has the Asian tradition of Wilfredo Lam and gives a start to the so-called "New Cuban

locally traditional.

The photo collection, bringing together reproductions of pictures taken by three of the best Cuban photographers, features shots of urban and rural everyday images, portraits of celebrities (famous Cuban actors and singers) and anonymous persons.

Three films were presented between 5-7 January. The first one, titled *Inconsoled Memories* features events that took place in Cuba in 1962. It presented the story of an intellectual bourgeoisie who refuses to leave Cuba with his family and decides to stay in Havana under the rule of a regime which he disagrees with. The film won several international prizes and is considered one of the most important films ever produced during the Cuban revolution.

Lucia was the second film on show. Through the story of three Cuban women, the film succeeds in portraying three life stages of the Cuban revolution in quest for freedom.

The story of a policeman who penetrates a Cuban anti-revolution gang residing in the mountains, is the theme of the third film *A Man From Macinico*.

Flavoursing Ramadan with musical creativity

AMMAN (Star)—Following its tradition of organizing unique activities during the month of Ramadan, the National Music Conservatory (NMC) of the Noor Al Hussein Foundation will be holding five major events.

Under the patronage of Her Majesty Queen Noor, the main theater of the Royal Cultural Center will stage on Wednesday 15 January the first of these activities. The world-famous master of oud and the art of maqam, Munir Bashir puts his long experience and exceptional talent to practice in an evening of meditation on the oud. The brilliance of Bashir's skill will be embellished by the unique program he has prepared. The program features compositions and improvisations on various Arab Maqams that correspond to the holy month of Ramadan.

Marking the first presentation of Rus-

sian musicians, renowned conductor and pianist Constantine Orbelian and violinist Maria Safarikis will perform a violin and piano recital featuring popular pieces from the violin and piano repertoire. The concert will be held in cooperation with the Embassy of the Russian Federation in Amman.

In their second performance, the Orchestra of the National Music Conservatory, with its 62 musicians, will join in to accompany Orbelian in Tchaikovsky's ever popular 1st Piano Concerto and Safarikis in Beethoven's Violin Concerto. These two activities come on the heels of the cooperation agreement which was endorsed during the recent visit made by the President of the Russian International Center of Culture to the National Music Conservatory. The two activities will be held on Saturday 18 and 22 January respectively at the Royal Cultural Center and in cooperation with the Royal Jordanian.

More classical music is lined up for Saturday, 23 January as Philippe Giusiano, one of the top pianists in the world, treats piano and Chopin lovers, in particular to a piano recital of masterpieces by the romantic Polish composer, Frederick Chopin. The recital



Boushaq

will be held at the Royal Cultural Centre in cooperation with the French Cultural Centre and Royal Jordanian.

To end its program with a truly Ramadan finale and under the patronage of Her Majesty Queen Noor, famous Tunisian singer Lotfi Boushaq will convey the spirit of Ramadan as he chants *Nabawi* praises, *Muwashshahat* and poems, accompanied by his ensemble. Boushaq is known for his ability to sing versatile types of songs. His *Sarajevo* which made quite an impact on the Jordanian public was broadcast on the television television, organized to aid the people of Bosnia last year. He also sang *Lamoni Elli Gharo Minni* which is currently topping the Arab song chart. This is not to mention that he is one of the best to sing the famous *Nabawi* praise *Banat Sou'ad* by the Arab poet, Ka'b Bin Zuhair. The evening will be held on Tuesday, 4 February at the InterContinental Hotel in cooperation with Royal Jordanian and Tunis Air.

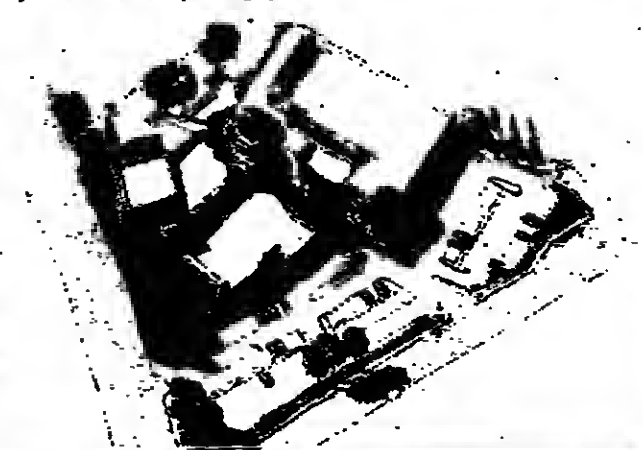
Mall promises to be pride of Jordan



AMMAN (Star)—Amman Town Center is to be Jordan's largest landmark mall. Built over 15000 square metres, the mall is located in Tala' Al Ali at the Youbel intersection. The designer of the mall is architect Mr. Rasem Badran, the winner of the International Aga-Khan Award. The Amman Town Center will have the largest C-TOWN branch both in the US and Jordan.

In addition to the department store and supermarket store, the mall will have more than 60 various types of shops and retail outlets. These include restaurants, rent a car center, tourism and travel office, hotels' agents, pharmacy, antique shops, daily services and information offices, hardware, ladies' and men's wear, banks, money exchange shops and jewellers.

Moreover, there will be an Art Gallery for art exhibitions. To have joy and fun while shopping, the center is equipped with a very advanced security and safety systems. These are run by a highly qualified management staff. Other facilities are five main entrances through beautiful green gardens, a Plaza holding shows and festival celebrations, and Luna Park for children, surrounded by more than 500 parking spaces.



AGENDA

Exhibitions
■ *Menatours* at Baladna Art Gallery, continues till 14 January.
■ *Mini Bazaar* at Um El Kundum. Lithographs, old postcards and photographs on Jerusalem, Chinese paintings, arts and crafts, fresh farm produce, off the Airport Highway on the way to the Arabian Horse Club, first left at the top of the hill, Friday 10 January from 11:00 am till 5:00 pm. Tel: 664805.
■ Works by Marwan Kasab-Bachi at the Darat Al Funun, ends today.
■ Works by Clara Amado at the Spanish Cultural Center, continues till 15 January.
■ *From Script to Abstraction* at the The Jordan National Gallery of Fine Arts, continues till 12 January.
■ *Contemporary Arab Artists Exhibition*, The New Collection at the Darat Al Funun, continues till 27 February.
Films
■ *Les Rigours* at the French Cultural Center, 13 January, at 8:30 pm.

Music at its best by Freddy

AMMAN (Star)—Music is an enchantment. It is an art that is learned rather than acquired. The phrase practice makes perfect very much applies to musical training.

It is with this in mind that Freddy for Music was established in 1994. In such a very short time it has built itself a strong reputation in musical education in Jordan.

With a highly trained team of professionals, the music center offers academic and practical teaching methods to all age groups.

Today, it has more than 420 willing students learning to play the piano, guitar, drums, cello and the violin.

But that's not all. The three-storey building in Wasfi Al Tal Street is something of a novelty. While it does not claim to be the first of its kind in Jordan, the owners say quite simply that they seek to popularize classical music.

Indeed, Freddy, one of the owners of the center, looks on his institution as more than just a business. He said that "my aim is to enthuse musical tastes in Jordan."

In a spacious showroom, it offers its clients a large variety of quality musical instruments, together with a full maintenance service.

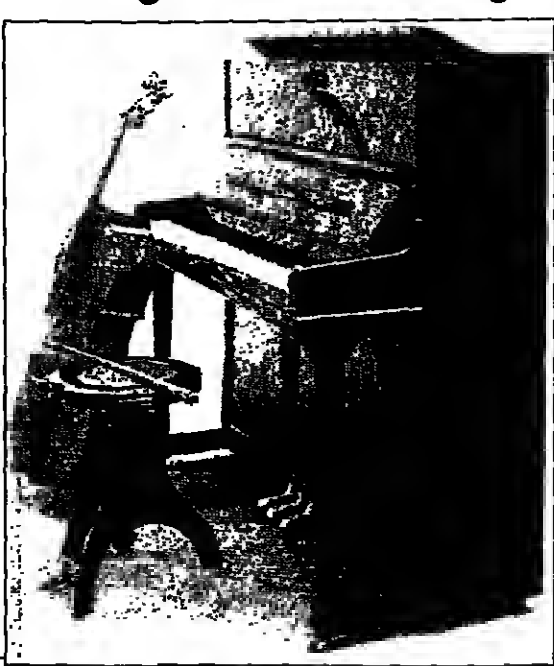
Freddy for Music services include tuning, installation and maintenance, painting and renovating pianos, and piano rentals. For those with exquisite tastes, Freddy for Music goes to the extent of decorating pianos with Victorian style paintings.

The center was very active in the past year. In 1996 it sponsored many musical charity events.

Mary Daoud, the public relations director at the center and Freddy's sister said "We are keen on holding quality concerts—offering something different to our highly aware audience and clientele."

She added that "we are working on including as many cultural events as possible for 1997. However, they are seeking to be choosy to maintain their quality."

What is interesting is that the center caters for every taste. Aspiring students can either take musical lessons for their own tastes or can sit rigorous exams with accredited certifi-



cates from the UK. Freddy and his partner Mr. Nadim Gargour are both musicians and come from musical families.

SCRAPBOOK

By Christian Doumit

Borderless enchantment

WE HAD all gone to the Tanourin Restaurant to celebrate Salam Kanaan's *Return to Salt* exhibition and the arrival of his new baby girl Eleanor Zara a few days earlier in London. Towards the end of the evening over a glass of white wine, a French diplomat began to talk of his experiences in Yemen and the Sinai. I listened to him with great attention—not only because his experiences were unique—but because when he talked about his wanderings he seemed to paint them. Everything he described remained in my head like a finished canvas. It was a peculiar conversation that evening and nobody has ever given me the ambience of a place so thoroughly as he did Egypt and the Sinai. And he wondered why Middle Easterners had their eyes turned towards Paris and London instead of to all the glorious places in the Arab World.

As a poor boy from Lebanon, I had never felt comfortable crossing Arab borders—except those of Jordan and Lebanon. Many years ago I was refused entry into Libya because my visa had expired by a few hours. I was held incommunicado all night and deported the next morning on the first available flight which was leaving for Rome. Although my destination was Tunis, I wasn't allowed to wait a few more hours to catch the Tunis flight. Of course, coupons were peeled off and I had to purchase a new airline ticket to pursue my trip.

That conversation that evening at the Tanourin caused a certain confusion but I decided to go to the Sinai with my German-born wife and our house guest, a lady from the Swiss embassy in Cyprus. From Arqaba we took the speedboat to Nuweiba where upon arrival our passports were stamped. The Swiss and German passports were immediately returned to their owners but mine and all other Jordanian passports were kept at the immigration officer's desk as we were asked to wait in the adjoining lounge. Twenty minutes later when all passengers had disembarked, I was escorted to the office of the Chief Immigration Officer who very politely asked me to sit down as he made the motion of going through my passport. I asked him what was all this hassle about and told him that my foreign travelling companions were dismayed at the way Egyptian authorities treated their Arab brethren. He was quite apologetic and told me that he was only reciprocating the courtesies Lebanese authorities extended to Egyptians. I said I hadn't come to Egypt to work illegally and that I was here as a visitor eager to share with my friends the beauty of the Sinai. Clearly we had both made our point and my passport was returned to me without further ado.

Once past customs and immigration, the fascination of the place takes over. Walking by the small harbor in Sharm El Sheikh was enchanting on the bright sunny morning when we visited St. Catherine's Monastery on Christmas Day. This monastery has stood for 1400 years in the Sinai Desert. Since it was built in the era of Justinian, it has preserved its special character from the time of the Arab conquest and kept its image as a sacred bible site, where the symbolic meanings of the Old Testament are illuminated and interpreted in the worship of Jesus Christ and the Virgin Mary.

From Sharm El Sheikh, we proceeded to Ras Moham-mad where we were able to swim and look at the coral reefs and all sorts of beautiful fish. Our trip ended on a spiritual route when we visited St. Catherine's Monastery on Christmas Day. This monastery has stood for 1400 years in the Sinai Desert. Since it was built in the era of Justinian, it has preserved its special character from the time of the Arab conquest and kept its image as a sacred bible site, where the symbolic meanings of the Old Testament are illuminated and interpreted in the worship of Jesus Christ and the Virgin Mary.

THE FAR SIDE

By GARY LARSON



"OK, here's one, Marv: What's got 12 legs, six eyes, a hairy thorax, was found dead in its display case this morning, and goes 'crunch!' inside a submarine sandwich?"



"I can't believe you. We go in and out of this cave a hundred times a day—but you always just have to try that thing!"

مكتبة النور

For many treasures, cold cash dictates their resting place

Generous to a fault, Egypt's loss is the rest of the world's gain

By Omar Younes

THERE ARE NOVELS written about the lengths that a man is willing to go for a woman, but none quite like this story. Neither the Egyptian government, nor the United States Customs Agency nor the US state of Maine's Attorney General can tear antique store owner Terry R. Lewis away from the woman that has caught his fancy—a beautiful 3,000 thousand-year-old Egyptian mummy. But if you happen to have around US\$10,000 he might let you have her.

Late this past summer, the *Boston Globe* wrote an article on Lewis, his mummy and his unique antique store, The Nonesuch House in Wiscasset, Maine. According to Lewis, the Attorney General of Maine called him early the next morning to make sure he had legally obtained the mummy, adding that someone would be coming to verify it. Lewis bought the female mummy from the Morse Museum in New Hampshire three and a half years ago. Ira Morse had brought her to the US in the 1920s.

Somehow a homicide detective was dispatched down to The Nonesuch House to inves-

tigate a "dead body." The good natured detective and Lewis enjoyed a laugh, the detective signed off and Lewis thought his hassles had ended. Then, on August 23 a US customs official paid Lewis a visit and told him they intended to place a restraining order on the mummy until they investigated its acquisition and contacted the Egyptian government.

Lewis was ready to fight it out in court. But under pressure from the press, US customs backed off. "I have no quarrel with the Egyptian government," said Lewis. I believe they (Egyptian government) were pressured by US customs into giving a quick answer."

Lewis has been willing to let the Egyptian government inspect his mummy. In fact, they had informed him in writing that they would be out to his store on December 9 or 10; as

of the 15th they had yet to show. In the meantime, due to his tight financial situation Lewis has decided he must sell her.

"Many people have benefited by her being here. I've had about 40 different schools come and bring their kids. She's open to the public here. She has also brought business to the town, although all the other antique dealers here hate me. It's been a fun ride," said Lewis.

Egyptologist Dr. Kent Weeks, known for his recent discovery of Egypt's largest tomb which is believed to be the burial place for several of Pharaoh Ramses II's sons says the affair is a storm in a tea cup. "There are many legitimate antique dealers in Europe with ancient Egyptian artifacts. There is nothing illegal as long as they can prove it was taken out of Egypt over 100 years ago or, if it was taken less than 100 years ago, that they have documents stating it was done so with the permission of the government. This is supported by UNESCO and Egyptian law."

However, for the past 15 years Egyptian law regarding the removal of antiquities from Egypt's borders has been tightened. Is it a case of closing the barn door after the horse has al-

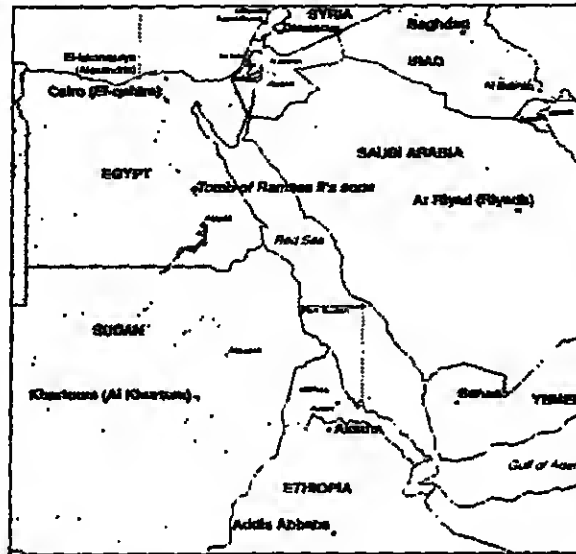
ready run out? Probably not. There are enormous numbers of antiquities still left in Egypt and, as Weeks's recent discovery proves, there are still a lot more to be found.

It is unfortunate that many ancient Egyptian artifacts are spread throughout the world. Fads and silly superstitions fueled this worldwide hunger for ancient Egyptian artifacts. At times during the 19th century mummies were exported to Europe where they were crushed and mixed into a liquid concoction which supposedly helped fight against aging. Cities coveted ancient Egyptian monuments to add importance and majesty to their aura.

The truth is that most of these artifacts were taken legally or, in some cases, given away by the Egyptian government. Egyptians have never been noted as astute deal-makers—their generous nature generally gets the better of them. For example, the obelisk in Paris was given as a gift to France by Mohamed Ali, the father of modern Egypt.

In return the French gave Egypt a beautiful grandfather clock, which has yet to work. ☺

OMAR YOUNES IS ASSISTANT TO THE PUBLISHER AT *The World Paper*.

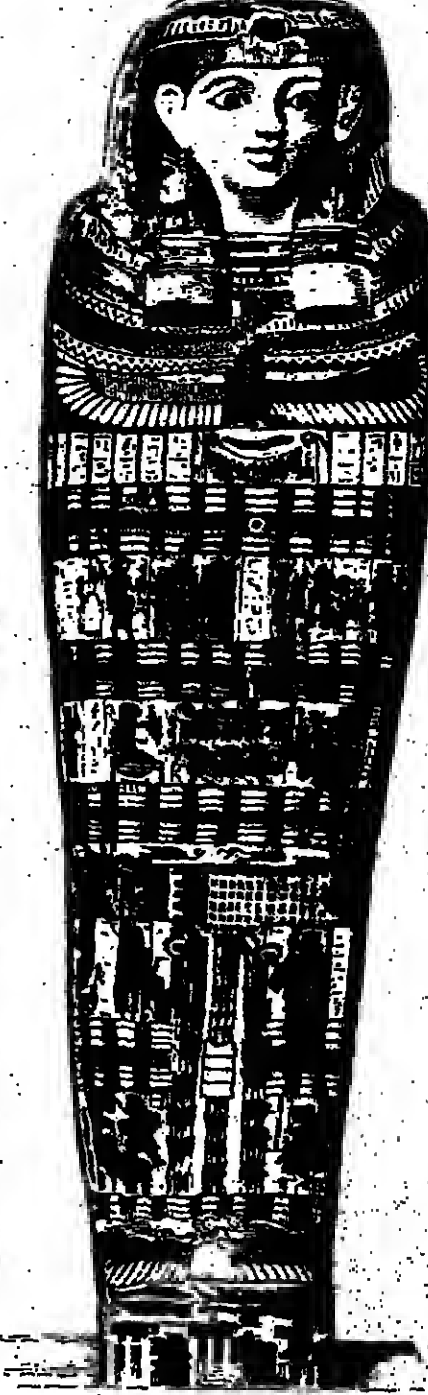


concluded a 1995 visit to Ethiopia by declaring that the monument should be returned. Moreover, at the ICAD head of states summit last November in Djibouti, the Italian Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs officially stated that, "Italy has taken the political decision to return the Aksum obelisk to Ethiopia."

When this political talk about the obelisk results in action is still an open question. But surely it is a signal that the case is irreversible and has reached its fi-

nal phase. All that remains now is to figure out the procedures for the practical repatriation of the great obelisk.

This case also sheds some light on the efforts being made by Ethiopia to get back its stolen treasures. Ethiopia's apparent success may help define the validity of ancient debts and how long they can endure. In addition, the concerted effort of pressure groups, cultural diplomacy and advocacy at the international level offers a blueprint for successful "collection" of these debts. ☺



TOWARDS HOME

Continued from page 1

over the original copies of Ethiopian manuscripts. The issue at large remained under the mercy of individual morality and collective conscience.

For understandable reasons the issue of the Derg and the establishment of a new government in 1991 ushered in a revival of the call for the return of the great obelisk. Various pressure groups were established mainly around intellectual and business circles inside the country.

The campaign gained momentum last March during the centenary of the Italian defeat at Adowa, an event organized to bring Ethiopians and Italians together.

Conferences and public gatherings were also another feature of the campaign. The conference on the safeguarding of historical objects, held in Aksum

in September 1994 and a petition signed by over 13,000 citizens of Aksum asked for the obelisk's immediate return. These efforts were reinforced by a passionate appeal from scholars abroad.

More importantly, the case seems to have gathered irreversible political momentum. The Ethiopian House of the Peoples Representatives devoted part of last year's session to the return of the Aksum obelisk and other cultural and historical artifacts looted on the orders of Mussolini. The session was enlivened by a heated debate involving the public, scholars and government officials. It resulted in a unanimous resolution urging Italy promptly to implement the agreement of 1947.

Italy has already given a solemn, written pledge to return the obelisk. But so far, the Italians prefer to continue dealing with the issue by being completely silent. As one responsible Italian scholar put it,

this is largely because it requires the consent of Italian authorities—mainly those based in Rome—and a breakthrough in a complex and multi-layered decision-making process in which national pride is a major factor.

The campaign, however, continues unabated and is beginning to disturb the silence prevalent in Italy. This is most evident among the Italian diplomatic community. For a country which has a close historical and economic attachment with Ethiopia, it is difficult to turn a deaf ear to such a delicate situation.

The new spirit became more evident when the Italian Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs, Emanuele Scamacca,

or another of the opportunists who currently run the country.

"It's very difficult to handle and comprehend," remarks a guide from the Ministry of Tourism, who, like many Cambodians, has had an epoch of political experience packed into a quarter century. "I have lived under five regimes," says the 32-year-old Var Eng Leang. Evacuated from Phnom Penh in 1975 as a 12-year-old during the Khmer Rouge-mandated exodus to the countryside, she survived three years of child labor. Later she was rehabilitated by the Vietnamese occupiers and sent to Cuba for training. Today Eng Leang is a one-person tour of the confusions and contradictions that riddle the "new" Cambodia.

"My generation, those who have survived, don't know what to think anymore. From King Sihanouk, to Lon Nol, to Pol Pot to the Vietnamese and now to this coalition government. The only thing we do know is that the Khmer Rouge were animals who, under the guise of peasant patriotism, bled and butchered our country. And somehow they're being granted amnesty and the rest. What can I do about it? Why can't the world do something about it?"

Eng Leang is not alone. The survivors of Cambodia are desperately trying to regain a country that was racked by genocide and now is being ravaged by corruption. The country's timber and fishery resources are being stripped by specious private producers from Thailand, Malaysia and even Laos, almost as much as its population was raped by the Khmer Rouge of yesterday.

One debt from the past has led to another for the present. And is absolving those who owe the most horrible human debt. ☺

CAROLAN SEWELL, EDITOR-IN-CHIEF OF *The World Paper*, RECENTLY VISITED CAMBODIA.



Here we evil, you too evil, speak no evil, Cambodia's leaders want to erase the past by closing the Killing Fields museum.

WOOLING DEADBEATS

Continued from page 1

Filled with skulls, pictures and the torture weapons used on the estimated two million educated Cambodians and their families who were killed, the three-barre museum document the most grisly and immediate past.

The Cambodian people didn't buy the destruction of the museums. But the government has gone ahead with a policy of amnesty, even guaranteeing jobs—some in the Cambodian Army—for an estimated 50,000 KR fighters who have turned themselves in since 1993.

Today this policy of expediency by a strapped government seeking security has turned into one of open efforts to secure political advantage, with each of the co-prime ministers trying to woo the perpetrators of the horror.

It has created the incredible spectacle of Hun Sen flying to a KR stronghold on the border of Thailand to offer amnesty and have his picture taken by the press. Prince Ranariddh, the other co-prime minister (and not a former Khmer Rouge) had to one-up him by suggesting direct contact with the reclusive and secretive Pol Pot.

One upshot of this political dance is the recent reintroduction of some 4,000 KR guerrillas into the Royal Cambodian Armed Forces. Answering to Eng Sary, a chief architect of the KR's genocide who was for a period under official sentence of death, the former members of the Democratic National Union Movement were photographed in November trying on their new official uniforms. In the background, their old and new leaders mouthed politenesses through barred teeth as they maneuvered for maximum political advantage.

Let's up the ante in this macabre farce. It is time to say the jaded people of Cambodia are bored for the spectacle of the butchery and mysterious Pol Pot emerging from a secret lair, serving as a political trump card for one



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1:00—Holy Koran
1:05—Min Alhad
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1:35—Cartoon
1:40—Chris L'Am
2:00—Feature Film
Case of the Witch
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2:15—Cartoon
2:30—Call for pray
2:40—Muppet Show
2:50—French Prog
3:00—News Headl
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4:50—Brand & J
5:00—Ramadan T

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1:05—Min Alhad
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1:30—The Farnes
1:40—Call for pray
1:50—You Bet You
2:00—French Prog
2:10—News Headl
2:20—Fresh Prince
2:30—Oriental R
2:40—Baby's B
2:50—Fiction
3:00—Tycoon
3:10—News at Te
3:20—Islam in a C
3:30—World
3:40—The River K
3:50—Mini Series



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The Star's GUIDE

Programs on JTV from 11-17 January

ENGLISH PROGRAMS

SATURDAY

1:00—Holy Koran
1:05—Min Alhadi Al Mo-hammadi
1:30—Cartoon
2:30—Chris Cross
3:00—Feature Film: *The Case of the Witch*, starring Madeleine Langlois & Stefani Gaudri
4:50—Call for prayer and if-tar link with Channel One
5:30—Muppet Show
6:00—French Programs
7:30—News Headlines
7:35—Hanging with Mr Cooper (Comedy)
8:02—Oriental Rugs (Doc)
8:30—Prison
9:10—Superman-Lois and Clark
10:00—News at Ten
10:25—Journey Into Islam
11:00—Mcgyver
11:50—Classical Movie: Julius Caesar, starring: Marion Brando & James Mayson
1:15—Ramadan Talks

SUNDAY

1:00—Holy Koran
1:05—Min Alhadi Al Mo-hammadi
1:30—The Famous Five
3:00—Feature Film
4:50—Call for prayer and if-tar link with Channel One
5:30—You Bet Your Life
6:00—French Programs
7:30—News Headlines
7:35—Fresh Prince of Bel Air
8:02—Oriental Rugs (Doc)
8:30—Babylon 5 (Science Fiction)
9:10—Tycoon (Doc)
10:00—News at Ten
10:25—Islam in a Changing World
11:30—The River Kings (Mini Series)

1:15—Ramadan Talks

MONDAY

1:00—Holy Koran
1:05—Min Alhadi Al Mo-hammadi
1:30—Cartoon
2:30—Deepwater Haven
3:00—Feature Film: *Spirit Rider*, starring Herbert Barnes & Tom Jackson
4:50—Call for prayer and if-tar link with Channel One
5:30—1 love Lucy
6:00—French Programs
7:30—News Headlines
7:35—Rosanne
8:02—Islam in the West (Doc)
8:30—Babylon 5 (Science Fiction)
9:10—The Lazarus Man
10:00—News at Ten
10:25—Journey Into Islam
11:00—Under Suspicion
11:30—The River King (Mini Series)
1:15—Ramadan Talks

TUESDAY

1:00—Holy Koran
1:05—Min Alhadi Al Mo-hammadi
1:30—Captain Planet
2:00—French Programs
2:30—Dog House
3:00—Feature Film
4:50—Call for prayer and if-tar link with Channel One
5:30—You Bet Your Life
6:00—French Programs
7:30—News Headlines
7:35—Murphy Brown
8:00—Encounter
8:02—Oriental Rugs (Doc)
8:30—The Lost Civilizations (Doc)
9:10—News at Ten
10:25—Islam in a Changing World
11:00—Snowy River
11:30—The River Kings (Mini Series)



Superman-Lois and Clark, Saturday at 9:10 pm

1:15—Ramadan Talks

WEDNESDAY

1:00—Holy Koran
1:05—Min Alhadi Al Mo-hammadi
1:30—Cartoon
2:30—Escape from Jupiter (Science Fiction)
3:00—Feature Film
4:50—Call for prayer and if-tar link with Channel One
5:30—The Muppet Show
6:00—French Programs
7:30—News Headlines
7:35—Baker'sfield P.D. (Comedy)
8:02—Oriental Rugs (Doc)
8:30—Challenges
9:10—NBA: Basketball
10:00—News at Ten
10:25—Journey Into Islam
11:00—Cobra
11:30—The River Kings (Mini Series)
1:15—Ramadan Talks

THURSDAY

1:00—Holy Koran
1:05—Min Alhadi Al Mo-hammadi
1:30—Cartoon

Amman cinemas

- Philadelphia I (Tel: 634149): Daylight
- Philadelphia II (Tel: 634149): First Knight
- Plaza (Tel: 699238): The Hunchback of Notre Dame Ransom
- Concord I (Tel: 677420): Tango & Cash
- Concord II (Tel: 677420): Dumb and Dumber

2:30—Crystal Maze
3:00—Feature Film: *From the Mixed-up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler*, starring: Lauran Bacallik Jean Barnwell
4:50—Call for prayer and if-tar link with Channel One
5:30—French Programs
7:30—News Headlines
7:35—Down to Earth
8:02—Oriental Rugs (Doc)
8:30—Babylon 5 (Science Fiction)
9:10—Hunter
10:00—News at Ten
10:25—Journey Into Islam
11:50—False Arrest
1:05—Ramadan Talks

PROGRAMMES EN FRANÇAIS SAMEDI

3:00—Dessins animés
3:30—Emission jeunesse
6:00—Série policière: Jack
7:00—Le journal
7:15—Magazine Ziva

DIMANCHE

3:00—Dessins animés
3:30—Documentaire: La France aux 1000 villages
6:00—Magazine: Faut pas rêver
7:00—Le journal
7:15—Magazine: Magazine sud

LUNDI

3:00—Dessins animés
3:30—Magazine: Montagne
6:00—Documentaire: Les loups du Niger
7:00—Le journal

Programs are subject to change by JTV

Highlight of the week at the Pleasure Dome

● **Stolen Hearts:** Part-time plasterer and sometimes petty thief (Frank Obrien—Larry) has been commissioned by his cousin to pull a simple job...steal a valuable painting and deliver it to a client. Roz (Bullock) his fed up girlfriend has made him promise that this will be his last scam. As they take up temporary residence in an unoccupied beach house, two teams of pursuers are hot on their trail: the FBI led by O'Malley (Yaphet Kotto) who still nurtures an obsession with collaring famous art thief Phill the Shill and a crew of criminals led by Frank's Cousin Beano (Wayne Robson) the mastermind behind the caper.



Courtesy: The Pleasure Dome

ORIGINAL Video Releases

■ **DUMB & DUMBER:** Hilarious throughout, Jim Carrey leads in this comedy that gives a new meaning to the word stupid.

■ **H. POSTINO (THE POSTMAN):** Italian with subtitles, grossing more than any other European film ever at the box office with \$50,000,000 in the first 10 weeks. This comedy won more than a handful of awards including the "Palm D'or" at Cannes.

■ **PINK FLOYD "PULSE":** The concert that stunned the world with its laser show and special effects featured for the first time the performance of "Dark Side Of The Moon" LIVE

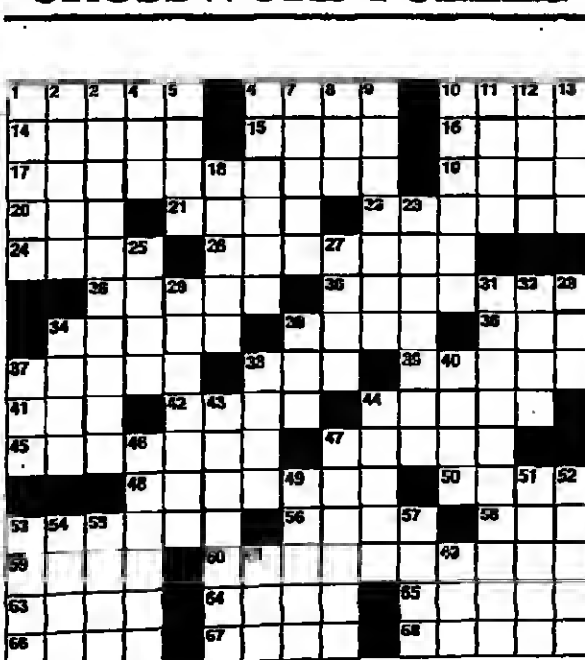
■ **ULTIMATE FIGHTING:** You've seen wrestling, Kung Fu movies, etc. but this is different. Strictly for over 18's and not for the sensitive taste or the faint-hearted... this gruesome fight is real and without rules.

■ **NIXON:** Sir Anthony Hopkins (Silence of the Lambs, Remains of the Day) plays the scandalized US president in a superb, world class drama. A must viewing!

■ Also released are the following titles starring Rowan Atkinson (Mr Bean): Unseen Bean, Black Adder-Sense & Sensibility, Rowan Atkinson Live. Visual Comedy, Final Frolics of Mr. Bean.

Courtesy: "The Pleasure Dome"
Tel: 676358 - Fax: 5338067

CROSSWORD PUZZLE



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32 Unarmed
33 Audible signals
34 Kind of station
35 Word off
36 Quadrangle surrounded by cloisters
37 Chopped food
38 Arch
39 Loud sound
40 Get going
41 Sitar
42 Cry at bullfights

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THIS WEEK'S HOROSCOPE

By Linda Black

Weekly Tip: The sun's in Capricorn, the sign of the straight man, and the moon's in Sagittarius, the sign of the clown. Pick whichever role you like best and launch into your own comedy act.

Aries (March 21-April 19): You'll be in the mood to travel. If you can't get away, study a foreign language instead.

Taurus (April 20-May 20): Apply for loans so you can sign up for an adventure. Push yourself beyond reality as you know it.

Gemini (May 21-June 21): You could be strongly attracted to a seemingly unsuitable type. This warrants further investigation.

Cancer (June 22-July 22): These are tough days, but a good partner helps. You can't do that job by yourself.

Leo (July 23-Aug. 22): You'll be too busy to spend much time on love, but you can squeeze some in. It's worth the effort.

Virgo (Aug. 23-Sept. 22): Your home should be a cozy place to be. Invite a special friend to share the ambience. You'll be making plans for your future together soon.

Libra (Sept. 23-Oct. 23): Learn something you can use to fix up your place. Then get to work. You won't be in the mood to do anything else.

Scorpio (Oct. 24-Nov. 21): Put a little more money into your career and you could make your life a lot easier. Stay home as much as possible and relax. Continue to practice a new skill you're learning.

Sagittarius (Nov. 22-Dec. 21): Pay off bills. Don't buy anything new — it won't work out as well as planned. You may get a check from work already done, but not from gaming.

Capricorn (Dec. 22-Jan. 19): Finish old business so you'll be ready to rip and tear. Those are the days you should start all your new projects.

Aquarius (Jan. 20-Feb. 18): Your friends are in a fabulous mood. Don't let them keep you from doing your assignments or you'll be in a world of pain.

Pisces (Feb. 19-March 20): Expect all kinds of wild assignments. Your supervisor will be in a frivolous mood. Hang out with friends — you'll get a lot accomplished.

If You're Having a Birthday This Week: Finish up everything you've already started. If you can do that, your success is assured.

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Bridge

Where's the Beef?
By Omar Sharif and Tannah Hirsch

Neither vulnerable. North deals.

NORTH
♠ J 9 8 2
♥ A Q J 10 4
♦ J 3
♣ 4 3

EAST
♠ K 6
♥ 8 5
♦ A 10 8 7
♣ A 10 8 7

SOUTH
♠ A Q 10 7 3
♥ K 9 7
♦ 6 4
♣ K J 6

The bidding:
North East South West
Pass Pass 1 ♠ Pass
3 ♠ Pass 4 ♠ Pass
Pass Pass

Opening lead: Ace of ♠
If you need a particular card to be right to fulfill your contract, place it where it has to be. Once that is done, you might be able to deduce the lie of the cards.

North's decision to make an invitational jump raise of partner's spades rather than introduce hearts has our unqualified endorsement. Once an adequate trump fit has been

found, confirm the suit. It makes the subsequent bidding far easier.

West led the ace of diamonds and East signaled as well as possible by following with the five. The diamond continuation was taken by East with the queen and back came a low club. Should declarer insert the jack or the king, or is it a pure guess? Consider the situation. Declarer has already lost two diamond tricks and must lose at least one club trick, which will complete the defensive book. Therefore, declarer cannot afford to lose a trump trick into the bargain. Ergo, the king of spades must be with East if South is to have any reasonable chance of landing the game.

East has already shown up with the king and queen of diamonds, and must have the king of spades. Give East the ace of clubs as well, and East would almost certainly have opened the bidding in second seat.

That means the ace of clubs must be with West and, for the contract to succeed, East has to have the queen. Therefore, insert the jack of clubs. When that forces the ace, and East subsequently turns up with the king of spades, as you inferred, the four-spade contract sneaks in under the wire.

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Jumble

Unscramble these four words, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.

ECKER

YARPT

ICETOX

CHIPSY

Now arrange the circled letters to form the surprise answer, as suggested by the above cartoons.

Print answer here: A

ANSWER: CREEK. CREEK PARTY EXOTIC PHYSIC



Do you think it's real? He won't say.

WHAT THE SPY CONSIDERED HIS TOUPEE

Words of Wisdom

The art of making a fine speech is simply to know when to shut up.

Success is always welcome, but failure sometimes teaches us more about ourselves.

Speculation is like dreaming while awake — it's a pleasure because it has no basis in reality.

Fear breeds despair.

Act on the truth you know, and you will learn the truth you need to know.

The unfortunate thing about life's experiences is that it's difficult to profit from anyone else's.

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TRUE! By Daryl Cagle



California courts have upheld the right of prosecutors to exclude fat, loudly dressed women from juries.

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Le Jourdain

Supplément en français du Star

SELON

Pour les journa-
listes jordaniens, l'année
1996 a été bien meilleure
que 1994, année marquée
par de très nombreux
procès et interpellations.
Mais si on la compare à
l'année 1995, le bilan n'est
pas très bon.

1996 a vu
l'incarcération de douze
journalistes et l'interpel-
lation d'une vingtaine
d'autres. Comme toujours,
les journalistes ont joué le
rôle de bouc émissaire au
milieu des changements et
des bouleversements poli-
tiques accompagnant
l'évolution de la société
jordanaïenne. La presse,
semble-t-il, devrait tou-
jours se conformer aux
principes, qui ne cessent
de changer, des gouverne-
ments successifs. Son rôle
est de satisfaire les capri-
ces des responsables poli-
tiques.

En 1994, par exemple,
25 procédures judiciaires
ont été engagées à
l'encontre de journalistes
suite à la publication
d'informations sur des
«partis ou des groupes po-
litiques interdits». Or,
pour la plupart, ces
«groupes interdits» étaient
des comités populaires
créés pour combattre la
normalisation des relations
avec Israël.

En 1995, le nombre de
procédures judiciaires est
tombé à onze, selon les
statistiques établies par le
gouvernement. Toutes
sont une fois de plus liées
aux changements politi-
ques du gouvernement
intervenus dans le ro-
yaume.

Ainsi, le motif
principal d'inculpation re-
tenu contre les journalistes
a été la publication
d'articles jugés «offensants
pour les dirigeants d'États
voisins, amis ou arabes».

En 1996, on constate
que la plupart des pour-
suites judiciaires sont liées
aux émeutes de la fin qui
ont secoué le Sud du pays
au mois d'août dernier.

En résumé, le harcè-
lement contre les journa-
listes depuis la loi sur la
presse de 1993 ne tient pas
au manque de profession-
nalisme ou à la publication
d'informations erronées.
Les procédures judiciaires
engagées ne sont pas non
plus le résultat d'insultes à
certaines personnes. Elles
sont le résultat de leçons
que le gouvernement sou-
haite donner à la presse
pour imposer telle ou telle
décision politique et la
faire ainsi accepter par
l'opinion publique.

On peut déduire de cette
stratégie que les condam-
nations à venir concer-
neront les attaques dirigées
contre l'unité nationale
puisque 1997 sera en Jor-
danie l'année d'élections
parlementaires. Un impor-
tant débat a déjà commen-
cé dans le pays sur la ré-
forme de la loi électorale
pour ce scrutin. Celui-ci
donnera bien sûr lieu à
des opinions différentes
dont la publication pour-
rait déboucher sur
d'éventuelles poursuites
judiciaires.

Il faut donc souhaiter
qu'au contraire, l'année à
venir soit celle d'une plus
grande liberté de la presse,
et celle de la fin de la tu-
telle qu'exerce le gou-
vernement sur les jour-
naux.

Sa'eda Kilani

Le Jourdain,
on y revient
Tous les jeudis
dans le Star
645380

Les négociations sur le retrait d'Hébron menacées d'explosion

Les Palestiniens ont évoqué cette semaine une possible «explosion» des négociations sur Hébron après la suggestion d'Israël de reporter de près de deux ans l'échéance des négociations sur le retrait de la Cisjordanie.

Le porte-parole palestinien, M. Marwan Kanafani, a indiqué que les déclarations faites en ce sens par le Premier ministre israélien «pourraient faire exploser les négociations».

Selon la presse israélienne, M. Netanyahu (notre photo) a affirmé à ses ministres que mai 1999 devait constituer une date-butoir pour le respect de «tous les engagements» de part et d'autre. Une déclaration qui signifierait que le Premier ministre israélien souhaite que le retrait de son armée de la Cisjordanie s'achève en mai 1999, alors qu'il est prévu en septembre 1997 par les accords d'Oslo sur l'autonomie.

Cette querelle sur l'après-Hébron bloquait hier encore les négociations sur un redéploiement israélien hors de cette ville de Cisjordanie, retrait qui a déjà plus de neuf mois de retard sur le calendrier.



Société

Les menaces du tourisme

Pour la Jordanie, qui a décidé de faire du tourisme l'un des principaux secteurs de son économie, la protection des sites est primordiale, de nombreuses menaces pesant sur son patrimoine.

Attirer l'attention du public sur l'importance du patrimoine national et des antiquités. Tel est l'objectif d'une campagne télévisée qui devrait être prochainement lancée par la Société royale de conservation de la nature (SRCN) et l'association des amis de l'archéologie. Cette campagne soutient le ministère du Tourisme et des Antiquités.

Comprendre plusieurs messages d'avertissement destinés à mettre en garde contre les dégradations sur les sites touristiques, ainsi que de nombreux émis-
sions sur les travaux de mise en valeur engagés dans le pays.

En décidant de jouer la carte du tourisme, la Jordanie se doit en effet aujourd'hui de protéger son capital générateur de devises. Car les menaces planant sur les vieilles pierres sont nom-
breuses.

Selon Ghazi Saoudi, directeur du comité du patrimoine national à la SRCN, les fouilles illégales, la pollution et les dégradations volontaires sont les menaces principales qui pèsent sur les sites. Cette campagne tentera donc de responsabiliser les Jordaniens.

«L'importance de cette opération tient à son caractère éducatif», explique Kamel Khloof, architecte rénovateur. «Car les gens ne sont pas toujours au courant des mesures de protection et de conservation qui existent».

Le dilemme qui se pose aujourd'hui est celui du développement concerté du touris-
me et de la protection des sites historiques. «Les sites ont d'abord une importance touris-
tique», commente Kamel Khloof. «La Jordanie prime souvent sur la conservation des sites, et parfois même sur l'intérêt des habitants».

Un regret partagé par Ammar Khammash, architecte re-

nommé qui a œuvré pour la restauration de nom-
breux lieux en Jordanie.

«La priorité est donnée au développement du tourisme sans penser à la préservation des sites», Pour lui, Um Qais, au nord de la Jor-
danie, est un bon exemple pour illustrer cette poli-
tique. Des oliviers datant de l'ère ottomane y ont en-
t été abattus pour permettre l'aménagement d'un par-
king. Et l'ancien canal ro-
main de ce site, malgré les efforts déployés pour le protéger, sert désormais de puits pour les eaux usées.

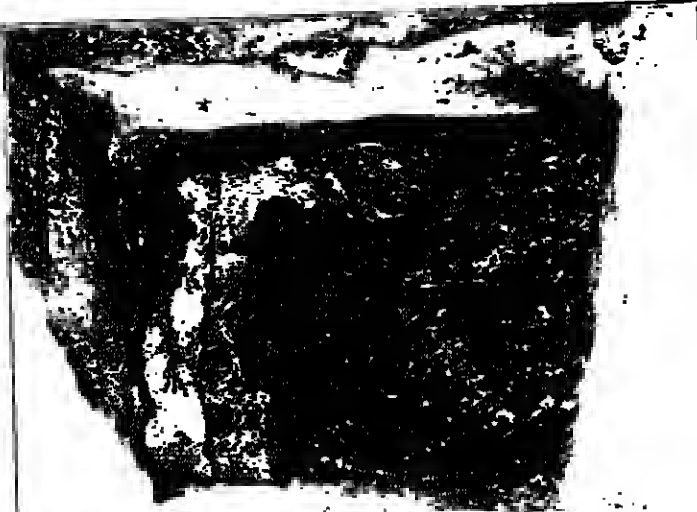
Le développement de chaque site et notamment de ses infrastructures touris-
tiques, doit être soigneusement étudié. «Tous les plans de rénovation sont soumis à un comité de spécialistes», explique Kamel Mahadin, architecte conseiller auprès du ministère du Touris-
me et des Antiquités. Un contrôle qu'Ammar Khammash juge insuffisant, regrettant une meilleure coordination entre archéologues et autorités ministérielles.

L'association des Amis de l'archéologie juge elle aussi cette coopération essentielle entre experts et ministères. Selon Rahmi Khouri, président de cette association, c'est par la discussion qu'un développe-
ment touristique concerté sera possible. «Il est en effet néces-
saire de prendre en compte les avis de tous les gens concer-
nés».

Un besoin urgent

de nouveaux musées

Si la protection des sites touris-
tiques doit passer par un développement plus harmo-
nieux, elle doit aussi prendre en compte les nombreuses dégra-



Une campagne télévisée destinée à inciter les citoyens à respecter les sites touristiques devra être bientôt lancée.

dations liées aux vols. Devenus pour quelques uns un moyen aisé de s'enrichir, les fouilles sauvages et le trafic d'objets anciens représentent un grave problème. Ces infractions commises par des individus ou des bandes bien organisées nuisent considérablement au patri-
moine du pays.

Or lutter contre ces exca-
vations n'est pas chose facile. «La Jordanie possède un nombre incalculable de sites archéologiques», explique Ghazi Bicheh, directeur du départe-
ment des Antiquités.

Claquer chacun de ces en-
droits n'est pas une solution car les professionnels du vol con-
naissent la parade. «On ne peut pas mettre un gardien pour chaque site», explique Ghazi Bicheh. «La solution, c'est de créer un musée national». Ac-
tuellement, la Jordanie reste en effet dans le besoin urgent de nouveaux musées pour abriter les richesses du pays.

Une législation existe déjà

pour punir les contrevenants.

Un trafic d'antiquité en-
court de 1 à 3 ans de prison, avec une amende de 200 JD.

Des peines allant de 2 mois à deux ans de prison, assorties d'une amende de 50 dinars, sont aussi prévues pour ceux qui se livrent à des dégradations sur des sites historiques.

Le gouvernement compte par ailleurs sur la population pour freiner la disparition de nom-
breux objets. Une loi propose une récompense à tous ceux qui permettent le démantèlement d'un réseau de contrebande.

«Nous croyons que les citoyens peuvent jouer un rôle complé-
mentaire dans la protection des antiquités», ajoute Ghazi Bicheh. Pour les autorités jor-
daniennes, il est en effet néces-
saire de faire comprendre à la population que le tourisme est l'affaire de tous afin de valoriser au maximum le capital touris-
me dont jouit le pays.

Nahed Khloof

Economie

Oublier l'année 1996

Pour espérer retrouver un taux de croissance plus important cette année, la Jordanie doit procéder à certaines réformes économiques, et notamment favoriser les investissements locaux et étrangers.

Les prévisions pour l'année 1997 de la plupart des économistes jordaniens ne sont pas très bonnes. En fait, tous semblent échaudés par l'expérience de l'année dernière. Au début de 1996, le Fonds monétaire international avait annoncé toutes sortes de bonnes choses pour notre économie. Un optimisme alors partagé par les responsables jor-
daniens.

Or, l'année 1996 s'est révélée être la plus mauvaise pour l'économie jordanaïenne depuis la fin de la guerre du Golfe en 1991. Après le rebondissement économique de 1992 et le chiffre record de la croissance dépassant 10%, les années 1993-95 ont connu un taux moyen de croissance du Produit national brut de 6,6%. Une performance qui permettait alors encore à la Banque mondiale de classer la Jordanie au rang des bons élèves. Des encouragements qui laissent naturellement espérer une bonne année 1996.

Or la triste réalité est que les espoirs des Jordaniens ont été trop gonflés. Pour des raisons politiques, on a construit des châteaux de sable à Washing-
ton et Tel-Aviv à propos des bénéfices de la paix. Les fameux sommets économiques de l'Union ont été vains.

Maïs quatre mois après cet événement semblait décevant presque retrouver de la mythologie, les grands projets régionaux sont gelés et les investis-
seurs hésitent toujours en ce

qui concerne la Jordanie. Alors peut-on s'attendre à ce que l'année 1997 soit meilleure?

La réponse est que dans les mois à venir, la situation écono-
mique de la Jordanie peut en-
core se détériorer, avant de connaître à nouveau une amé-
lioration.

Les dernières estimations officielles pour le taux de crois-
sance de l'année passée ne sont que de 4%. En prenant en compte le fait que la population jordanaïenne augmente elle de 3% par an, on obtient une croissance annuelle d'environ 1%. Ce qui équivaut, plus ou moins, à une situation de stagnation.

Comme il est peu probable que le rythme de croissance de la population se ralentisse beaucoup en 1997, il ne reste qu'à espérer que la Jordanie connaisse un phénomène sem-
blable à celui de 1992 pour retrouver un fort taux de crois-
sance.

Des taux d'intérêt trop élevés

Maïs les chances de voir un tel phénomène se répéter sont faibles. La conjoncture poli-
tique régionale n'est pas favora-
ble, et les réformes internes de l'économie jordanaïenne sont trop modestes et trop lentes pour réussir à vraiment changer la situation.

L'économie jordanaïenne souffre actuellement de taux d'intérêt trop élevés.

Pour maintenir le dinar à un

niveau élevé par rapport au dollar, la Jordanie est obligée d'appliquer une politique de forts taux d'intérêt.

Une mesure qui pénalise considérablement l'investissement. Pour emprunter dans une banque à Amman, il faut aujourd'hui accepter de payer un taux oscillant entre 15 et 15,5%. Un chiffre qui pour-
rait bien atteindre 18% d'ici le mois de juin prochain.

Si cette politique permet de défendre le précieux dinar, elle étrangle en revanche l'investis-
sement local.

Or, la tâche du gouverne-
ment est justement d'encourager les investisseurs locaux et étrangers à injecter des fonds dans l'économie jor-
danaïenne pour la rendre plus dynamique.

Faire preuve d'un pessimisme démesuré serait bien sûr exagéré. Maïs il faut cette année à tout prix éviter les espoirs gonflés des propagandistes pro-
israéliens qui ne cessent de parler des prochains bénéfices de la paix censés résoudre tous les problèmes de l'économie jor-
danaïenne.

Une seule chose est en fait certaine à l'heure actuelle: la paix dans la région est encore bien loin, et les mois à venir ne donnent pas à notre économie beaucoup de raisons d'espérer.

MEBA S.A.R.L.
Riad al Khouri

Eau

Une délicate concertation régionale

Une conférence sur la gestion locale de l'eau a réussi à réunir à Marseille pratiquement tous les pays méditerranéens. Une première qui n'a malheureusement pas débouché sur de grandes décisions en raison d'importants blocages politiques.

La première confé-
rence euro-méditerranéenne sur la gestion locale de l'eau qui s'est réunie fin novembre à Marseille a montré à quel point il est difficile de séparer l'aspect technique de l'aspect politique à propos de la ques-
tion de l'eau. Afin de réunir à la même table tous les pays de la région, y compris le Liban et la Syrie qui refusent notamment de prendre part aux groupes de travail multilatéraux issus de la conférence de Madrid, les orga-
nismes de cette réunion ont pris soin de ne pas aborder la gestion de l'eau au niveau régional. Une base de discussion qui, comme l'explique Christian Chesnot, journaliste au magazine international de l'eau Hydroplus et auteur d'un ou-
vrage sur la question de l'eau au Proche-Orient, n'a pas permis d'accoucher de décisions importantes.

«L'idée était de parler de gestion locale et technique de l'eau. Ainsi il était possible d'éviter tout le problème politique pour se concentrer sur une gestion locale et non régionale, technique et non politique». Or, cette formule destinée à rassembler tout le monde autour de la même table, a rapidement montré ses limites.

«Pour les Palestiniens, parler de gestion technique ou locale de l'eau ne mène à rien alors qu'ils n'ont pas le simple droit d'avoir de l'eau. Cela revient à mettre la charrue avant les bœufs», regrette Christian Chesnot.

Une situation que le chef de la délégation palestinienne Riyad Al-Khoudary a d'ailleurs vivement dénoncée en soulignant les retards énormes que connaissent certains projets en Cisjordanie et à Gaza. «Depuis les dernières élections israé-
liennes, nous sommes complètement perturbés car tous les dossiers en cours de négociations sont retardés. Le comité conjoint israélo-palestinien sur l'eau ne s'est pas réuni depuis mars dernier, et de nombreux projets, planifiés et financés, sont toujours en attente d'approbation. Nous avons l'impression que les Israéliens ne nous écoutent pas et font traîner les choses en

longueurs», déclarait récemment Riyad Al-Khoudary.

La seule décision concrète annoncée à l'issue de cette conférence a été la création d'un réseau d'information sur l'eau en Méditerranée. Un système qui devrait permettre à tous les pays signataires de la déclara-
tion de Marseille d'échanger leurs données, leurs expériences dans le domaine de l'eau. Une initiative qui ne peut, une fois encore, réellement être efficace sans prendre en compte l'aspect politique que revêt la question de l'eau dans la région.

«On imagine mal des pays, vir-
tuellement en guerre comme la Syrie et Israël, échanger des in-
formations hydrauliques qui sont toujours classées «secret défense». Dans les accords d'Oslo qui prévoyaient ce type de coopération «technique», les gestionnaires de l'eau pale-
stiniens attendent toujours que la partie israélienne leur fournisse des données hydrauliques», explique Christian Chesnot.

En ne pouvant inciter qu'à la protection de l'eau dans la région, et non au partage, la déclaration de la conférence de

Marseille montre combien il est difficile d'aborder le problème de l'eau au niveau régional.

Une prochaine réunion en Jordanie

Or le temps presse pour cer-
tains pays qui voient leurs ré-
serves d'eau diminuer dramati-
quement chaque année. C'est notamment le cas pour la Jor-
danie, qui avec la Libye, seule absente à Marseille. Maïs, Israël et les territoires palestiniens, utilisent déjà à plus de 100% ses ressources renouvela-
bles, ne laissant donc plus à ses ressources en eau le temps de se renouveler.

Les participants de la confé-
rence de Marseille se sont en tout cas déjà mis d'accord pour se rencontrer à nouveau et étudier la mise en place du réseau d'information régional.

Ce prochain rendez-vous devrait d'ailleurs avoir lieu au printemps en Jordanie et devrait réunir au moins une douzaine de pays européens et méditerranéens.

Olivier Bras

Reportage

Une page difficile à tourner pour Naplouse

Voilà maintenant plus d'un an que les troupes israéliennes se sont retirées du centre-ville de Naplouse. Depuis, la ville apprend à revivre dans une atmosphère de paix. Maïs les habitants ne peuvent pas oublier la présence israélienne aux portes de leur ville.

Après cinquante

années de guerre, Naplouse apprend à vivre aujourd'hui dans une atmosphère de sécurité. Longtemps occupée, cette ville située au nord de la Cisjordanie se relève pour entrer dans une nouvelle ère. Naplouse, qui a été prise par les Israéliens en 1967 pendant la guerre de six jours, fait partie des villes «rendues» à l'Autorité nationale palestinienne conformément aux accords de paix. Elle n'a en fait pas réellement été reconstruite, mais a connu le redéploiement des Israéliens. Avant, elle était placée sous le contrôle des soldats israéliens qui arrêtaient les enfants de l'Intifada. Au-
jourd'hui l'ambiance est calme, paisible et détendue. Une am-
biance qui peut cependant rapidement redevenir explosive, comme l'ont prouvé les affrontements meurtriers qui ont eu lieu fin septembre dans les territoires palestiniens et qui ont été particulièrement violents à Naplouse.

Si l'ny a plus de heurts quod-
idiens entre Israéliens et Palestiniens, la présence militaire israélienne se fait encore bien sentir. La tension s'est en fait déplacée autour de Naplouse. Sur les routes qui entourent la ville, les déplacements sont difficiles, pour les Arabes.

Naplouse est une petite ville nichée entre deux montagnes gigantesques, Garizim et Balata, qui redécouvre une vie long-
temps oubliée. Des générations qui sont nées au milieu des coups de feu et du couvre-feu s'orientent aujourd'hui vers une nouvelle lutte qui utilise cette fois la culture et la persévérance pour essayer de faire revivre les jours glorieux de la Palestine, relevant ainsi un nouveau défi contre les Israéliens.

Le village surveillé par deux implantations israéliennes aux sommets des montagnes, est divisé en deux, à l'instar de chaque ville possédant un lourd

passé historique.

Dans la nouvelle ville, qui s'est développée après le redéploiement des Israéliens, les investisseurs ont construit des appartements, des magasins. Les habitants ont eux aussi effectué des restaurations et entrepris de nouvelles constructions pour redonner de la vie à cette ville long-
temps étranglée.

Sur les mon-
tagnes, tout autour du vieux Naplouse, les projets de construction de piscine ou clubs de sports se multiplient.

«Maïs les projets industriels ou commerciaux sont irréalisables», commente un Palestinien de Naplouse. «Ce ne sont pas les Palestiniens qui peuvent les autoriser».

Un sentiment d'encerclement

La vieille ville connaît elle l'agitation d'une ruée. Des vestiges romains mis au jour récemment bordent la rue menant du rond-point principal au cœur historique de la ville.

Les anciennes ruelles avec leurs pavés témoignent elles aussi d'une époque révolue. Celle d'une longue guerre marquée par les martyrs de l'année 1936 et les opérations suicides des jeunes de l'Intifada.

Les ruelles sont aujourd'hui en réfection grâce à une aide japonaise offerte à l'Autorité nationale palestinienne.

Elles plongent le flâneur dans un ensemble de traditions: l'artisanat, les pâtisseries, une spécialité de Naplouse, et les sa-
vons à l'huile d'olive, comme



Des Palestiniens célébrant le 11 décembre 1995 à Naplouse la fin de l'occupation israélienne.

ceux de Provence. Le nom d'Al Kassabeh est bien connu des Israéliens et des Palestiniens. Pendant l'Intifada, ce quartier était l'un des plus dangereux de la ville. Une particularité due à la son architecture typique de la région. Les maisons de chaque côté de la route communiquent entre elles par des ponts. Des arches en pierres délimitent les ruelles qui serpentent dans la ville.

Une de ces ruelles mène au hamman turc qui date du règne des Ottomans dans la région. Il a lui aussi été restauré et ouvert pour ceux qui recherchent tranquillité et repos.

Au milieu des maisons émergent des usines, celles qui produisent des savons à l'huile d'olive. Connue pour ses montagnes, la ville de Naplouse olivier aussi pour sa culture des oliviers et ses savons. La ruelle qui descend vers cette fabrique s'appelle toujours la rue des perles, en raison de la couleur du savon fabriqué et du nom-

bre de fabriques installées dans cette rue. Malheureusement, peu de fabriques sont encore en activité aujourd'hui.

Pendant l'Intifada, les jeunes appartenant au Fatah ou à Hamas se servaient de ces bâtiments comme de bases militaires où ils venaient se cacher ou organiser leurs activités.

«Au début de l'Intifada, les Israéliens n'osaient pas entrer dans ce quartier, sachant que les jeunes de la résistance multipliaient les embuscades», raconte un jeune qui habite à côté d'une usine de savons désaffectée depuis l'occupation israélienne en 1967.

A présent, la situation a changé car les gens ont moins peur de se retrouver dans les prisons israéliennes. Maïs c'est aujourd'hui la ville entière et ses 140 000 habitants qui ont le sentiment d'être prisonniers, encerclés par ceux qui se sont retirés du centre-ville.

Oroub el Abed

C'est la vie
L'agenda français d'Amman

Cinéma

Cycle Philippe Noiret
au Centre culturel
français.

Le 13 janvier à 20h30,
«Les ripoux» de Claude Zidi (1984).

Avec Philippe Noiret,
Thierry Lhermitte, Ré-
gine, Grace de Capitani.



Documentaire

«Enquête sur Abraham», le 9 janvier à 16h00 au Centre cul-
turel français

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Survey suggests Jerusalem issue may not be deal-breaker in talks

Continued from page 1

Interviews with Israeli and Palestinian officials in the past few days have revealed that the issue of Jerusalem is not as much a deal-breaker as it was once thought to be. The survey, conducted by the Middle East Centre for Strategic Studies, found that 60 per cent of the Israeli respondents and 50 per cent of the Palestinian respondents believe that Jerusalem is not a deal-breaker in the peace process.

The survey also found that 70 per cent of the Israeli respondents and 60 per cent of the Palestinian respondents believe that the issue of Jerusalem is not as much a deal-breaker as it was once thought to be. The survey, conducted by the Middle East Centre for Strategic Studies, found that 60 per cent of the Israeli respondents and 50 per cent of the Palestinian respondents believe that Jerusalem is not a deal-breaker in the peace process.

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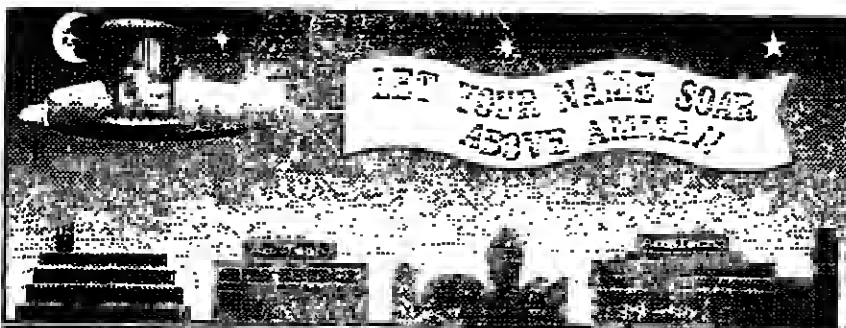
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Dar al Fuman	643252	Royal Racing Club	09-801233
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